

This is My Body

In Remembrance of Me, Week 1

I. Two _____ are Shared by All Christians: _____ and _____

- **Disclaimer 1:** The Roman Catholic Church and the Eastern Orthodox Church actually observe seven different sacraments, including Communion and Baptism (and in fact, the Eastern Orthodox never actually limited the number of sacraments to only seven).
- **Disclaimer 2:** The Salvation Army and Quakers do not practice Baptism or Communion at all.
- **Disclaimer 3:** Some Christians prefer to call baptism and communion “ordinances” instead of sacraments. “Sacrament” means “mystery,” and refers to a sacred act that grants some grace through a physical element. “Ordinance” simply refers to practices that have been commanded by Christ. Both are useful names.

II. The Second of These Sacraments Goes by _____

- **Communion:** This name comes from 1 Cor 10:16 where Paul talks about us sharing or participating (communing) in the blood and body of Christ. This is the word also often translated “fellowship.”
- **The Lord’s Supper:** This name comes from 1 Cor 11:20, where Paul calls it this.
- **The Eucharist:** This name comes from the Greek word that means “to give thanks.” This name is not used in the New Testament (though see 1 Cor 10:16), but this is a very common name used almost immediately in the early church. Its first appearance is in a book called the Didache (early second century or late first century): “Now concerning the Eucharist, give thanks as follows. First, concerning the cup...” (9.1).
- **The Mass:** This name derives from a Latin word that means to dismiss or to send. It derives from the final sending out of the people at the end of the liturgy (for a long time spoken in Latin). The idea is that God’s people are at that point sent out to fulfill God’s will in their lives.
- Even more names are used by different groups: “Breaking of the Bread” (see Acts 2:42), “the Blessed Sacrament,” “the Sacrament of the Altar,” “the Divine Liturgy,” “the Divine Service,” or “the Divine Mysteries.”
- All of these are good names that bring out different nuances. Evangelical churches like ours typically use the more specifically biblical terms “Communion” or “The Lord’s Supper.” Our church uses both.



III. The Most _____ and _____ Aspects of Communion are Jesus’ Words about His Body and His Blood

- **Mark 14:22-25 // Matthew 26:26-29**

^{14:22} While they were eating, Jesus took bread, and when he had given thanks, he broke it and gave it to his disciples, saying, “Take it; **this is my body.**”

²³ Then he took a cup, and when he had given thanks, he gave it to them, and they all drank from it.

²⁴ “**This is my blood** of the covenant, which is poured out for many,” he said to them. ²⁵ “Truly I tell you, I will not drink again from the fruit of the vine until that day when I drink it new in the kingdom of God.”

^{26:26} While they were eating, Jesus took bread, and when he had given thanks, he broke it and gave it to his disciples, saying, “Take and eat; **this is my body.**”

²⁷ Then he took a cup, and when he had given thanks, he gave it to them, saying, “Drink from it, all of you. ²⁸ **This is my blood** of the covenant, which is poured out for many for the forgiveness of sins. ²⁹ I tell you, I will not drink from this fruit of the vine from now on until that day when I drink it new with you in my Father’s kingdom.”

- **Luke 22:14-20 // 1 Corinthians 11:23-26**

^{22:14} When the hour came, Jesus and his apostles reclined at the table. ¹⁵ And he said to them, “I have eagerly desired to eat this Passover with you before I suffer. ¹⁶ For I tell you, I will not eat it again until it finds fulfillment in the kingdom of God.”

¹⁷ After taking the cup, he gave thanks and said, “Take this and divide it among you. ¹⁸ For I tell you I will not drink again from the fruit of the vine until the kingdom of God comes.”

¹⁹ And he took bread, gave thanks and broke it, and gave it to them, saying, “**This is my body** given for you; do this in remembrance of me.”

²⁰ In the same way, after the supper he took the cup, saying, “**This cup is the new covenant in my blood**, which is poured out for you.

^{11:23} For I received from the Lord what I also passed on to you: The Lord Jesus, on the night 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, after supper he took the cup, saying, “**This cup is the new covenant in my blood**; do this, whenever you drink it, in remembrance of me.” ²⁶ For whenever you eat this bread and drink this cup, you proclaim the Lord’s death until he comes.

IV. Jesus’ _____ in Communion is Understood in _____

1. The Roman Catholic View: Transubstantiation

- In this view the bread and wine actually become the body and blood of Christ

“Christ becomes present in the Sacrament of the Altar by the transformation of the whole substance of the bread into His Body and of the whole substance of the wine into His Blood.... This transformation is called Transubstantiation....The Power of consecration resides in a validly consecrated priest only....The Worship of Adoration (Latria) must be given to Christ present in the Eucharist.... It follows from the wholeness and permanence of the Real Presence that the absolute worship of adoration (Cultus Latriae) is due to Christ present in the Eucharist” (Ott, *Fundamentals of Catholic Dogma*, 379, 387, cited in Grudem, *Systematic Theology*, 992).

- The Eucharist is also thought to be a sacrifice, a representation of Jesus’ once-for-all sacrifice

“The Holy Mass is a true and proper Sacrifice....in every Mass Christ also performs an actual immediate sacrificial activity, which, however, must not be conceived as a totality of many successive acts but as one single uninterrupted sacrificial act of the Transfigured Christ....The Eucharistic Sacrifice of propitiation can, as the Council of Trent expressly asserted, be offered, not merely for the living, but also for the poor souls in Purgatory” (Ott, *Fundamentals of Catholic Dogma*, 402, 408, 412-13, cited in Grudem, *Systematic Theology*, 992).

- But the literalism of this view seems to deny the more likely symbolic nature of Jesus’ words

“When Jesus says, ‘This is my body,’ he means it in a symbolic way, not in an actual, literal, physical way. In fact, as he was sitting with his disciples holding the bread, the bread was in his hand but it was distinct from his body, and that was, of course, evident to the disciples. None of the disciples present would have thought that the loaf of bread that Jesus held in his hand was actually his physical body, for they could see his body before their eyes. Similarly, when Jesus said ‘*This cup* which is poured out for you *is the new covenant in my blood*’ (Luke 22:20), he certainly did not mean that the cup was actually the new covenant, but that the cup *represented* the new covenant” (Grudem, 993).

“Even Jesus’s disciples didn’t always know how literally or figuratively he was speaking. When Jesus spoke literally about his coming death and resurrection, his disciples wondered what he meant (Mark 9:9-10). When he spoke figuratively, about Lazarus sleeping or about going to him, disciples took him too literally and said, ‘He’ll get better if he sleeps!’ and ‘He’s going to his death too!’ (John 11:11-16). When he spoke figuratively about the yeast of the Pharisees and Herod, they thought he was speaking



about literal bread (Mark 8:15-16). Is it any surprise that disciples today still have trouble agreeing on when Jesus was speaking literally and when he was speaking figuratively?

...
I believe that the context of the Last Supper again helps us. At the Passover, the host declared, ‘This is the bread of affliction that our ancestors ate when they came out of the land of Egypt.’ No one believed that this was literally the same bread that the ancestors ate—thirteen hundred years stale and actually already chewed up and digested by the ancestors. Rather, they were sharing in the experience of their ancestors. I believe that by the Spirit we share in a genuine spiritual experience. I don’t see it as Christ’s physical presence in the same way as the incarnation, however, which really was his flesh and blood with human DNA, just as I don’t think the Passover physically makes us second-millennium BC Israelites about to leave Egypt” (Craig Keener, “Is it literally his body and blood?” <https://craigkeener.com/is-it-literally-his-body-and-blood-mark-1422-24/>)

“The saying was uttered by Jesus while he was bodily present with the disciples, and they could see that his body and the bread were two different things. One might compare how a person showing a photograph of himself to a group of friends could say, as he points to it, ‘This is me.’ In any case, Jesus had done nothing to the bread which could have changed its character; all that he had done was to give thanks to God for it, not to bless or consecrate it in any way” (I. Howard Marshall, *Last Supper*, 85-86).

- Viewing the mass as a sacrifice also seems to detract from Jesus’ once-for-all sacrifice

“Moreover, the Roman Catholic view fails to recognize the clear New Testament teaching on the *finality* and *completeness* of Christ’s sacrifice once for all time for our sins: the book of Hebrews emphasizes this many times, as when it says, ‘*Nor was it to offer himself repeatedly*, as the high priest enters the Holy Place yearly with blood not his own; for then he would have had to suffer repeatedly since the foundation of the world. But as it is, he has appeared *once* for all at the end of the age to put away sin by the sacrifice of himself...Christ, having been offered *once* to bear the sins of many’ (Heb 9:25-28)” (Grudem, 993).

2. The Eastern Orthodox View: Real Presence as Mystery

- This view is similar to the Roman Catholic view, but is left as more of a mystery and it is not as “explained” as in the Roman Catholic view.

“The most awesome ceremony in the Orthodox Church is the *Mysterion* (sacrament) of the Holy Eucharist. This ceremony was instituted by Jesus Christ the day before His Crucifixion, as He enriched His Church forever with the Divine Gifts, His own Body and Blood. This ceremony of the Holy Eucharist is both His sacrifice for the salvation of man and a sacred *mysterion*. The Holy Eucharist is the seal of the proclamation of the communion with God. It is the only Sacrament offered by the Church in which the elements of bread and wine not only carry the Grace of God, as a *mysterion*, but are ‘changed’ into and ‘are’ the very Body and the very Blood of Christ, being a propitiatory sacrifice” (“Fundamental Teachings of the Eastern Orthodox Church,” Greek Orthodox Archdiocese of America).

<https://www.goarch.org/-/the-fundamental-teachings-of-the-eastern-orthodox-church>

- This view seems to stumble at essentially the same points as the literalism of the Roman Catholic view, though leaving it as a mystery seems more plausible than Roman Catholic explanations.

3. The Lutheran View: Consubstantiation

- Lutherans reject the Roman Catholic view of transubstantiation, but still hold that Jesus’ body and blood is present in some literal sense, “in, with, and under” the elements. The bread does not *become* Jesus’ body, but it *contains* Jesus’ body.

“It is the true body and blood of our Lord Jesus Christ together with the bread and wine, instituted by Christ for us Christians to eat and to drink” (*Luther’s Catechism*, “The Sacrament of Holy Communion”).

- This view seems to stumble at essentially the same points as the literalism of the Roman Catholic view.



4. The Rest of Protestantism: A Symbolic and Spiritual Presence of Christ

- This view sees the bread and wine as symbolic and Christ's presence as spiritual.

"In distinction from Martin Luther, John Calvin and other Reformers argued that the bread and wine of the Lord's Supper did not change into the body and blood of Christ, nor did they somehow contain the body and blood of Christ. Rather, the bread and wine *symbolized* the body and blood of Christ, and they gave a visible sign of the fact that Christ himself was truly present. . . . Today most Protestants would say, in addition to the fact that the bread and wine symbolize the body and blood of Christ, that Christ is also *spiritually* present in a special way as we partake of the bread and wine. Indeed, Jesus promised to be present whenever believers worship. . . . (Matt 18:20). And if he is especially present when Christians gather to worship, then we would expect that he will be present in a special way in the Lord's Supper" (Grudem, 995).

5. Our Church View is Symbolic, but Our View also Allows for Christ's Spiritual Presence.

- "(11) *We believe* that the Lord's Supper is an ordinance given for believers only, to be remembered until He comes. It is a proclamation of His death, a reminder of our gathering together unto Him; it symbolizes the fact that an abiding fellowship in the Lord Jesus Christ can only be maintained by self-examination and confession of sin; it pictures our need of constantly partaking of Christ for spiritual sustenance; it bespeaks a unity of the Body of Christ—the Church."
- I suggest we go beyond this merely symbolic view and also understand that Jesus is really present to bless in a unique way when we celebrate of the Lord's Supper:

"Because I understand 'eucharist' to include the *observance* and not merely to refer to the *elements*, I take it by faith that Christ is present in a way in which He is not present in any other church observance. In a very *real, physical, fleshly* sense, when the physical and spiritual *body of Christ*—His church—joins together in unity and submission to Christ, Christ is physically present, having associated Himself mystically—but truly—with the gathered church.

What, practically, is the significance of Christ's presence? When we pray that God will be 'with' somebody or draw near to us, we are really asking God to *do* something. We're seeking real, tangible *effects*. In fact, where God is, God *does*. Where God is *present*, God is *active*. When we think of Christ present in the eucharist, we should think less about how He is or isn't lingering in the bread and wine, but more of *what* He is doing in the midst of the people. God has chosen to work His sanctifying power through the proper observance of the Lord's Supper in a way that's different from any other church practice.

One effect of Christ's active presence is the unity and purity that result from self-examination, proclamation, and participation. In this sense, the Lord's Supper is an essential means of sanctification. God has chosen to bring about sanctification of the whole church through the Lord's Supper in a way that no other individual or corporate discipline can. When we properly observe the ordinance, we will grow together spiritually as a family of God. However, there's another side of His promise of participation in the 'cup of blessing' (1 Cor. 10:16). Failure to partake properly brings judgment in the form of weakness, sickness, and even death (1 Cor. 11:29–30)!" (Michael J. Svelgel, *RetroChristianity*, 161).



The Bottom Line

_____ Communion as one of the _____ of your _____.
...by learning from the Catholic Church that Communion is the _____ of _____.
...by learning from the Orthodox churches that Christ's presence in Communion is _____.
...by learning from the Lutheran churches that Christ's presence with us must be _____.
...by learning from other Protestant churches that Christ is _____ in communion.

In other words: "Communion is, like, super important, you guys!"