

# The Sacrament of the Holy Communion (1)

## Listed Scriptures

Mt 26:26-30; Mk 14:22-26; Lk 22:14-23; Jn 6:41-71; 1 Cor 10:17-34

## Lesson Aim

- 1) To study three important theological views on the Holy Communion
- 2) To help students understand how our doctrine of the Holy Communion fits in with other Christian views

## Memory Verse

"Then Jesus said to them, 'Most assuredly, I say to you, unless you eat the flesh of the Son of Man and drink His blood, you will have no life in you.'" (Jn 6:53)

## Bible Reading For This Week (for students and teachers)

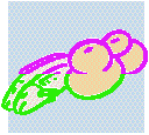
1 Corinthians 3-7

**Note to teachers:** This quarter's lessons do not contain the Bible Background section since they pertain more to the history of our church.

## W A R M U P



How exactly are bread and juice transformed into Christ's body and blood during the Holy Communion? Is it a literal or figural transformation? The question of the transformation has intrigued and frustrated Christians for ages. In this lesson, we will see what theologians had come up with in regards to the Lord's Supper. Hopefully, it will give us a better understanding of what other Christian denominations believe in before we delve into our own doctrine on the Holy Communion in Lesson 11.



## *Theology on the Lord's Supper*

The Holy Communion is commonly referred to by Christians as the Eucharist, from the Greek *eucharistia*, meaning thanksgiving. It is also called the Latin mass, the Lord's Supper, or the breaking of the bread. Because it is dominical, or instituted by Jesus, it is considered one of the two most important sacraments to many Christians. Ironically, while it is a symbol of unity, many interpretations of the Holy Communion have caused great divisions among Christians. Let us now explore some of these theories.

### **A. Roman Catholic Transubstantiation**

Transubstantiation is the idea that the substance, or essence, of bread and wine are changed into the literal body and blood of Christ at the moment of consecration, while the accidents - the appearance, taste, touch and smell – remain the same. Appearing in the 9th century, this idea was declared the faith of the Roman Catholic Church in 1059. Then, in 1215, transubstantiation was officially declared as a doctrine of the fourth Lateran Council (held in the Lateran Palace in Rome). The medieval church further refined this doctrine to incorporate:

1. concomitance – The blood and body of Christ are in each consecrated element. Thus, when you eat communion bread, you are eating both the body and blood of Christ.
2. consecration – The important part of Communion is not the communion with God, but the transformation of the communion bread and wine into Christ's body and blood through consecration by the priest.
3. sacrifice – As long as there is the real presence of Christ in the Lord's Supper (body, blood, soul and spirit), a sacrifice is offered to God.
4. propitiation – The sacrifice offered is propitiatory (used for reconciliation).
5. reservation - The host (consecrated elements such as bread and wine) can be reserved or kept for later use.
6. veneration - The reserved elements (for example, leftover communion bread) should be respected as the living Christ.

From 1543-63, the Council of Trent confirmed these details of transubstantiation

and added that the veneration given to the consecrated elements should receive the same worship (adoration) that is given God.

The Eastern Orthodox transubstantiation includes the idea of *epiclesis*, a Greek word meaning "invocation, or calling for the assistance or presence of a superior being." Most Eastern Churches believe when an *epiclesis* is made, the Holy Spirit makes it possible to change the bread and wine into the body and blood of Christ. This reflects the theology of the Eastern Church, which interprets the effectiveness of the sacraments as an answer of God to the prayer of the church. The church also uses leavened rather than unleavened bread.

### **B. Luther's Consubstantiation or Real Presence**

During the 14th century, religious reformers such as Martin Luther of Germany, Ulrich (Huldreich) Zwingli of Switzerland and John (Jean) Calvin of France came up with theological innovations to reform the church. One thing they jointly agreed on was the incorrectness of the doctrine of transubstantiation. They viewed transubstantiation as an unbiblical, illogical, superstitious, idolatrous idea that destroyed the real meaning of the sacrament. Out of the three, Luther most strongly criticized the church for transubstantiation, withholding the cup from the people and teaching that the Lord's Supper was a sacrifice offered to God. However, he still believed that Christ is physically present in the Lord's Supper.

To counter transubstantiation, Luther developed the doctrine of Real Presence, or the idea that the real flesh and blood of Christ mysteriously becomes "in, with and under" the Eucharist upon consecration. When the believers consume the Holy Communion, they are actually being fed by the physical presence of Christ. Later, others unofficially termed Real Presence as Consubstantiation.

### **C. Zwingli's Symbolism**

Luther's opponent and contemporary Ulrich Zwingli saw the Holy Communion as a purely symbolic act. While Luther was attached to the mystical tradition of the Catholic Church, Zwingli was influenced by humanism and its use of reason. Thus, he was unable to accept the physical eating of Christ in the Holy Communion. He believed that nothing could be taken from the real body of Christ after Christ ascended to heaven. Since Christ could not physically be present in the bread and wine, the elements of the Holy Communion merely represented the absent body of Christ.

## **D. Calvin's Spiritual Transformation**

Like Zwingli, Calvin believed that Christ retained a real body in heaven after ascension. Nonetheless, he disagreed with Zwingli's belief that the elements of the Holy Communion were a representation of the absent. Like Luther, Calvin believed that the Holy Communion was a true commune involving the real presence and feeding by Christ. However, Calvin also believed that the essence of Christ's body was the Holy Spirit, who gave Christ the body. He believed that the transformation of elements was spiritual, through the Holy Spirit, rather than physical. Like Luther, Calvin agreed the transformation was a deep mystery that could be accepted but not understood. He admitted, "If anyone should ask me how this [partaking of the whole Christ] takes place, I shall not be ashamed to confess that it is a secret too lofty for either my mind to comprehend or my words to declare... I rather experience than understand it."

## **E. The Christian Holy Communion Today**

Today, the Roman Catholic, Anglican and Orthodox Churches continue to hold the belief of transubstantiation. On the other hand, a minority of Protestants such as the Adventist groups have abandoned the sacrament altogether. However, most Christian denominations have adapted the Calvinistic theology of the Holy Communion. Some Baptists even practice close communion, which restricts the sacrament to those who are baptized properly within the church. Nonetheless, the methods of administering the Holy Communion differ vastly. Some use wafers. Others use leavened bread. Some use wine, while others use grape juice (Protestant groups). In the next lesson, we will learn more about the Holy Communion in the True Jesus Church.

### Teaching Tips

*Since the theology in this chapter may be foreign to some J2 students, it is recommended that the teacher prepare simple lecture notes or an outline to pass out. It may also help for the teacher to write out the key terms on the board so that students may visualize them. Additional information on Luther, Zwingli and Calvin may be found in the Oxford Dictionary of the Christian Church and the Evangelical Dictionary of Theology (ed. Elwell, Walter A., Evangelical Dictionary of Theology, Baker Book House, Grand Rapids, Michigan, 1984, pp. 653-656).*

## C H E C K F O R U N D E R S T A N D I N G



- 1** What are some other names used to describe the Holy Communion?
- 2** What is the Roman Catholic Church's traditional belief in the Holy Communion?
- 3** Who were Zwingli, Calvin and Luther? What were their views on the Holy Communion?
- 4** What school of theology does the True Jesus Church most closely resemble in terms of partaking the Holy Communion?

## L I F E A P P L I C A T I O N



### **Part A- Christ Liveth in Me**

Hand out one sheet of paper to each student. On one side, ask students to write down what they think it means to partake of the spiritual flesh and blood of Christ. On the same side, ask the students to write down at least three qualities that a Christian should have after participating of the Holy Communion. Ask the students to turn the paper over and write down an incident in which someone offended them. Was it hard to show Christian qualities during that incident? Why? How can we try to show that Christ liveth in us the next time the situation occurs? Ask the students to share.

### **Part B- Communion Memory Game**

Divide students into groups of 4-6 players. (You may wish to pair students up for the first game as practice). Distribute 28 blank index cards per team. Ask each team to make a set of 14 terms and 14 definitions within 10 minutes. Symbols or graphics may be used to match the pairs. Shuffle the cards and rearrange them, face down into 4 rows of seven. Each player will take turns flipping over two cards and reading them out loud. The player who identifies a matching set can go again after using the term in a statement relating to the Holy Communion. This may be repeated if the person identifies a second pair. At the end of the game, the person with the most pairs wins.

**Game Pieces:**

Eucharist	Holy Communion
dominical	instituted by Jesus
transubstantiation	substance same, accidents changed
substance	essence/ make up
accidents	the appearance, taste, touch and smell
concomitance	the blood and body of Christ are mixed in each consecrated element
consecration	transformation of the communion bread and wine into Christ's body and blood through prayer
sacrifice	an offering to God when there is a real presence of Christ during the Holy Communion
propitiation	the sacrifice offered is used for reconciliation
reservation	consecrated elements can be reserved or kept for later use
veneration	reserved elements should be seen as the living Christ
epiclesis	Greek word meaning "invocation, or calling for the assistance or presence of a superior being"
consubstantiation or real presence	the idea that real flesh and blood of Christ becomes "in, with and under" the Eucharist upon consecration
symbolism	elements of the Holy Communion merely represent the body of Christ

## R E F L E C T I O N &amp; P R A Y E R



*"Dear Lord Jesus, thank You for giving up Your life, Your body and Your blood for us. We are unworthy of your sacrifice. Thank you for bleeding and dying on the cross so that we may be redeemed from sin and take part with you. As the students go home today, let them also experience life within You. Let them keep what we have learned today and retain the knowledge of Your love so that they may witness for You in the future. Thank You, Lord, for all You have done. Amen."*