

St. Paul Lutheran Church

Sunday Morning Bible Class

Formula of Concord Series

Article 7 – The Lord's Supper

(Note: This question or controversy is primarily with the Sacramentarians (Reformed as we would label them today). Most other questions deal with the settling of internal questions that arose among Christian factions who remained in fellowship after the death of Luther. This question is included primarily because Sacramentarians continued to insinuate themselves into various Christian congregations and there promoted their errors. The writers of the Formula of Concord therefore believed it wise to deal with their errors in connection with the Lord's Supper in this document.)

The Question at Issue:

- A) Are the true body and blood of Christ truly and essentially present in Holy Communion is they are disseminated with the bread and the wine and if they are received orally?
- B) Is this true, essential body and blood received by all who commune, be they "worthy" or "unworthy," godly or godless, believers or unbelievers – the believers for life and salvation, the unbelievers for judgment?

Why It Matters

- 1) To deny the real presence of the Lord's true body and blood in the Sacrament is to open oneself to the judgments pronounced against those who eat and drink in an unworthy manner.
- 2) To grant that those who do not believe in the real presence when they commune are not sinning against the Lord's body and blood is essentially to cast into doubt the entire efficacy of the Lord's Supper.
- 3) To deny the clear words of Jesus when he instituted the Lord's Supper and to substitute man's words ("represents" vs. "is body and blood") is to cast into doubt every word of Scripture.

What the Bible Teaches

- 1) The body and blood of Christ are truly and essentially present, distributed, and received with the bread and wine.

Mark 14:22-24 And as they were eating, Jesus took bread, blessed and broke *it*, and gave *it* to them and said, "Take, eat; this is My body." ²³ Then He took the cup, and when He had given thanks He gave *it* to them, and they all drank from it. ²⁴ And He said to them, "This is My blood of the new covenant, which is shed for many.

- 2) The words of Christ when he instituted the sacrament are to be understood in no other way than in their literal sense: "*is my body... is my blood.*"

3) It is not by man's work, nor by the mere recitation of the minister, that effects or brings about this presence of the body and blood of Christ in the sacrament. It is rather credited solely to the power of our Lord Jesus Christ.

4) At the same time, the words of institution should, under no circumstances, be omitted. God's blessing upon the elements occurs through the recitation of the words of Christ.

1 Corinthians 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?

5) The Scriptural basis for this position is four-fold:

1. Jesus Christ is true God and true man in one person
2. God's right hand, where Jesus has gone, is everywhere. Jesus therefore, as both true God and true man, is everywhere.
3. God's Word is neither false, nor does it deceive.
4. God is not limited to being only at one place at one time – which is a restriction placed on Jesus by human philosophers.

6) Body and blood, as well as bread and wine, are received not only spiritually, by faith, but also orally. The body and blood are not eaten Capernaïtically (physically rending Christ's flesh and digesting it as other food.) Because of the sacramental union, communicants receive the body and blood of Christ in a supernatural, heavenly manner.

7) Believers and unbelievers alike receive the true body and blood, unbelievers to their spiritual harm.

1 Corinthians 11:27-29 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.

8) There is only one kind of unworthy guest at the Lord's Supper – those who do not believe. "He who does not believe is condemned already." The unworthy use of the sacrament increases, magnifies, and aggravates this condemnation.

Matthew 11:28-29 "Come to Me, all *you* who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. ²⁹ "Take My yoke upon you and learn from Me, for I am gentle and lowly in heart, and you will find rest for your souls.

9) No true believer, no matter how weak he may be, receives the sacrament to his spiritual harm or condemnation, for Christ instituted the Lord's Supper for Christians who are weak but repentant.

10) The worthiness of the guests at the Lord's Supper consists solely in the merit of Christ, which is made our own through faith, and never through our personal preparations or virtues.

What the Bible Rejects

- 1) Transubstantiation, which amounts to the annihilation of the substance and essence of the bread and wine.
- 2) The idea that Christ's words of institution are not to be understood in their literal sense.
- 3) That the body and blood of Christ are not received orally but only spiritually.
- 4) That body and blood are only representations of Christ true body, which resides far away in heaven.
- 5) That the true, real, essential body of Christ cannot be present in more than one location.
- 6) That Christ did not promise real presence when he instituted the Lord's Supper because he knew it would have been impossible for him to keep such a promise.
- 7) That faith (rather than the Word of God) is the power that causes the real presence.
- 8) That unbelievers do not receive the true body and blood, but only bread and wine.
- 9) That worthiness at the Lord's Supper depends on outward preparation, as well as faith.
- 10) That genuine believers can receive the Lord's Supper to their spiritual harm.
- 11) That the external elements should be adored or worshiped.
- 12) That communicants actually rend Christ's flesh with their teeth and digest it as other food (the so-called Capernaitic accusations leveled against Christians by the Sacramentarians).