



19 Minutes with Luther

Holy Communion

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The Institution of Holy Communion

First: What is the Sacrament of Holy Communion?

It is the true body and blood of our Lord Jesus Christ under the bread and wine, instituted by Christ for us Christians to eat and to drink.

Where is this written?

The holy evangelists Matthew, Mark, Luke, and the apostle Paul tell us: Our Lord Jesus Christ, on the night he was betrayed, 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, which is given for you. Do this in remembrance of me."

Then he took the cup, gave thanks, and gave it to them, saying, "Drink from it, all of you; this is my blood of the new covenant, which is poured out for you for the forgiveness of sins. Do this, whenever you drink it, in remembrance of me."

The Blessings of Holy Communion

Second: What blessing do we receive through this eating and drinking?

That is shown us by these words: "Given" and "poured out for you for the forgiveness of sins."

Through these words we receive forgiveness of sins, life, and salvation in this sacrament.

For where there is forgiveness of sins, there is also life and salvation.

1. Holy Communion is also called the Lord's Supper. During what festival meal did Jesus institute the Lord's Supper? Why was this a fitting occasion for the institution of this sacrament?
2. What is present in the Lord's Supper together with the bread and the wine? Explain how this can be so.
3. What blessings are offered and given through the eating and drinking of the Lord's Supper? What will this promise of blessings in the Lord's Supper lead us to do?
4. Reformed Christian churches claim that the bread and the wine in the Lord's Supper merely represent Christ's body and blood. Explain how this claim . . .
... changes Jesus' words of institution of this sacrament.

... empties the Lord's Supper of its blessings.

... robs Christians of the comfort that God intends they receive through this sacrament.

5. The Roman Catholic Church teaches that, as the priest consecrates the bread and the wine, the earthly elements are changed into the actual body and blood of Christ and no longer exist as bread and wine. This teaching is called transubstantiation. Furthermore, the Catholic Church teaches that at each Mass, Jesus is offered, again and again, as a "bloodless" sacrifice for sin. Explain how these teachings contradict the teaching of the Bible.

6. In Holy Communion what three co-unions exist . . .

... between the bread and the _____ and the wine and the _____?

... between God and each _____?

... between the believer and other _____?

7. Respond to the following statements:

It's all right to use grape juice instead of grape wine in the Lord's Supper.

It is important that a person receive the Lord's Supper as shortly before his death as possible.

Luther said:

"Though a hundred thousand devils, plus all fanatics, come rushing up to question how bread and wine can be Christ's body and blood, still I know that all the fanatic spirits and all the scholars heaped together cannot match the wisdom that the divine Majesty has in his little finger. Here stands Christ with the Word, 'Take eat; this is my body.' 'Drink of it, all of you, this is the new covenant in my blood.' That is where we shall take our stand and watch the futile attempts of those who would play schoolmaster with God and try to alter what he has spoken." (Tappert, p. 448.)

Closing Prayer

For your consoling supper, Lord, be praised throughout all ages! Preserve it, for in every place the world against it rages. Grant that this sacrament may be a blessed comfort unto me when living and when dying. Amen. (CW 312:8.)

At home

Memorize the Institution of Holy Communion and the Blessings of Holy Communion.

Helps

(1) Jesus instituted the Lord's Supper during the Passover meal. The subject of both of these meals is deliverance through the blood of a lamb. (2) The true body and blood of Christ are present in, with, and under the bread and wine. We cannot explain how this can be so. We know it is true simply because Christ has told us this in the Bible. (3) Because the true body and blood of Christ the Savior are present in the Lord's Supper, this sacrament offers the forgiveness of sins. And where there is forgiveness, there is also eternal life and salvation. This truth will lead Christians to partake of the sacrament as often as possible. (4) Jesus said that his body and blood are truly present in the Lord's Supper. (This is my body . . . my blood, not merely represented. If his body and blood were not present, but merely represented, then the Lord's Supper could not offer the blessings of forgiveness, life, and salvation Jesus has secured for us through his body and blood. Christians, then, would receive no comfort and assurance of forgiveness through the partaking of this meal. (5) There is no biblical support for the doctrine of transubstantiation. In fact, the Bible clearly teaches that there are four things present in the sacrament: body and blood and bread and wine. The idea of a bloodless sacrifice, made again and again for sin, contradicts the teaching of Scripture that "this priest [Jesus] . . . offered for all time one sacrifice for sins" (Hebrews 10:12). (6) In Holy Communion there is co-union between the believer and the body and the wine and the blood. Instead of grape wine, Jesus, however, used wine. It may be of special comfort to the Christian to receive the Lord's Supper shortly before death. However, we should be aware of the mistaken ideas that the Lord's Supper can or will heal physical illnesses or that sins committed after the reception of the sacrament remain unforgiven until the time when the sacrament is received again.