



THE BODY AND BLOOD

QUEST LESSON G-9

The Problem: Roman Catholic theology teaches that the Lord's Supper (Eucharist or Mass) is a sacrifice because the physical body and blood of Christ are substantially present in the bread and wine. The Council of Trent (1545-63) decreed as follows: "In the first place, the holy Synod teaches, and openly and simply professes, that, in the august sacrament of the holy Eucharist, after the consecration of the bread and wine, our Lord Jesus Christ, true God, and man, is truly, really, and substantially contained under the species of those sensible things... it is indeed a crime the most unworthy that they [bread and wine] should be wrested, by certain contentious and wicked men, to fictitious and imaginary tropes, whereby the verity of flesh and blood of Christ is denied..." ["The Canons and Decrees of the Council of Trent," in Philip Schaff, *The Christendom* (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Baker, 1889, Vol. 2, pp. 126-127].

On the doctrine of transubstantiation Trent decreed: "And because that Christ, our Redeemer, declared that which he offered under the species of bread to be truly his own body, therefore has it ever been a firm belief in the Church of God, and this holy Synod doth now declare it anew, that, by the consecration of the bread and of the wine, a conversion is made of the whole substance of the bread into the substance of the body of Christ our Lord, and of the whole substance of the wine into the substance of his blood; which conversion is, by the holy Catholic Church, suitably and properly called Transubstantiation." (Schaff, p. 130).

The doctrine was enforced by Trent in the Canons: "Canon I. If anyone denieth, that, in the sacrament of the most holy Eucharist, are contained truly, really, and substantially, the body and blood together with the soul and divinity of our Lord Jesus Christ, and consequently the whole Christ; but saith that he is only therein as in a sign, or in the figure, or virtue: let him be anathema... Canon III. If anyone denieth, that, in the venerable sacrament of the Eucharist, the whole Christ is contained under each species, and under every part of each species, when separated: let him be anathema." (Schaff, pp. 136-137).

Twentieth-century Roman Catholicism adheres strictly to the doctrine as defined by Trent and by the earlier Fourth Council of the Lateran (1215). John L. McKenzie, S.J., Professor of Theology at the University of Notre Dame, explains it in these terms: "Since the Fourth Council of the Lateran (1215), the official word for the sacramental change is transubstantiation, a rather barbarous term both in Latin and in English. As the Council defined it, it means that the entire substance of the bread is changed into the substance of the body of Christ, and the entire substance of the wine into the blood of Christ, with only the species of bread and wine remaining. The Latin word species here would normally be translated as 'appearances,' but in the cautious language of Roman Catholic theology, the Latin word usually goes into English as species and thus becomes unintelligible to the untrained. The Catholic assertion is based on the Aristotelian and medieval philosophy of substance and accident, defined in the schools respectively as that which exists in itself (substance) and that which exists in something else (accident). The bread and wine become substantially something else, but accidentally, they are unchanged. Thus, the body and blood of Christ are not seen, touched, or tasted; no substance is the object of the senses. But what is present is the substance, for only a substance can be present. The body and blood of Christ do not take on the sensible qualities of bread and wine. The body of Christ is neither expanded nor contracted nor moved from place to place; it simply becomes present where the transubstantiation has been effected by the sacramental formula... The Roman Church believes that 'the whole body' is present in the whole of the species and in any part of the species after division, as long as the portion is large enough to be perceptible to the senses. Thus, it believes that the communicant receives no more of Christ in bread and wine than he does in bread alone if one will pardon the expression." [John L. McKenzie, S.J., *The Roman Catholic Church* (New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1909), pp. 148, 151].

Richard P. McBrien writes concerning the Roman Catholic understanding of the Eucharist as a sacrifice: "It is official Catholic teaching (Council of Trent) that the Mass is a true sacrifice, not only of praise and thanksgiving and of commemoration but also of expiation for the living and the dead, without diminishing the value of the sacrifice of Calvary. Christ is the same victim and priest in the Eucharist as he was on the cross, although the mode of offering is different at Mass. The sacrifice of the cross was a bloody sacrifice; the sacrifice of the Mass is unbloody. Nonetheless, the fruits of the latter sacrifice are the same as those of the former. The sacrifice of the Mass, Trent declared, is 'properly offered not only for the sins, penalties, satisfactions, and other needs of the faithful who are living but also for the departed in Christ who are not yet fully cleansed' (Decree on the Mass, chapter I1)." [Richard P. McBrien, *Catholicism* (Minneapolis, MN: Winston Press, 1981), p. 763].

McBrien reminds us that various Protestant churches have accepted, to one degree or another, the Roman Catholic understanding of the Eucharist: "The sacrificial nature of the Eucharist is affirmed in varying degrees by the Anglican-Roman Catholic Consultation, Orthodox-Catholic, Lutheran-Catholic, Presbyterian-Reformed-Catholic, and in a 1970 consensus statement of a study commission of the National Council of Churches in the United States." (McBrien, p. 765). On the question of Christ's real presence in the elements, McBrien identifies an even greater agreement: "Here the consensus is even wider and stronger. Every consultation in which Roman Catholics have been involved affirms some measure of basic agreement on the real presence of Christ in the Eucharist. In addition to those mentioned in the paragraph above, there is the Disciples of Christ-Catholic consultation. The Lutheran-Catholic consultation again is emphatic: 'We affirm that in the sacrament of the Lord's supper, Jesus Christ, true God, and true man, is present wholly and entirely, in his body and blood, under the signs of bread and wine.'... The Lutherans do not reject everything implied in the medieval term transubstantiation, but they shy away from it because it is misleading" (pp. 195-196)." (McBrien, p. 766).

In the sixteenth century, Luther rejected Roman Catholic transubstantiation but held to a doctrine called consubstantiation. He clung to the idea of Christ's real physical presence in the bread and wine of the Lord's Supper but argued that the substance of the bread and wine remains; it is not transubstantiated into the substance of Christ's body and blood. Thus, to the substance of the bread and wine is added the substance of the physical body and blood of Christ. [See Paul Althaus, *The Theology of Martin Luther* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1966), pp. 375-403].

Both Zwingli and Calvin opposed the Roman Catholic and Lutheran doctrine of the real physical presence of Christ in the Supper. Calvin argued that the believer is united with Christ both physically and spiritually as, by faith, he partakes of the elements in the Supper. The Holy Spirit brings the communicant into union with the body and blood of Christ. Although the body of Christ is in heaven, it is by virtue of the Holy Spirit that the believer is joined to it and receives blessing from it. [See Justo L. Gonzalez, *A History of Christian Thought* (New York: Abingdon, 1975), Vol. 3, pp. 153-156].

Zwingli saw the elements in the Supper as symbols of the body and blood of Christ. By faith, the communicant receives Christ spiritually as he partakes of the Supper. He is reminded of Calvary and enters into a spiritual relationship with His Lord as, by faith, he receives Him into his heart by the Holy Spirit. When Jesus said, "This is my body" (Matthew 26:26) the verb "is" must mean "signifies," so that the statement is a metaphor. Jesus meant, "This represents my body." (Gonzalez, Vol. 3, pp. 73-76).

What does the Bible teach on this question? Who taught the truth, the Roman Catholic Church, Luther, Calvin, or Zwingli? What is the significance given to the Lord's Supper by Jesus and His apostles?

Objectives

First, we ask, is Christ physically present in the bread and wine of the Lord's Supper?

Second, is the Lord's Supper a sacrifice?

Third, is it necessary for the laity to partake of both the bread and wine?

Fourth, what is the true significance of the bread? Fifth, what is the significance of the wine?

I. Is Christ Physically Present In The Bread And Wine Of The Lord's Supper?

The Roman Catholic teaching that the substance of bread and wine is transubstantiated into the substance of the body and blood of Christ is based on the philosophy of Aristotle. Such an idea is not to be found in the Bible. Luther's teaching that the substance of the bread and wine remain, while the physical substance of Christ's body and "blood are added, is likewise quite unbiblical.

The Word

1. What statements did Jesus make concerning the bread and wine at the Last Supper? Matthew 26:26-28; Luke 22:19-20; 1 Corinthians 11:24-26.
2. What metaphoric application did Paul give to the cup and the bread? 1 Corinthians 10:16-17; compare 1 Corinthians 12:27; Romans 12:4-5; Colossians 1:24,
3. In His great sermon, in which He urged believers to partake of His flesh and blood, how did Jesus make it thoroughly clear that He was speaking metaphorically? John 6:33, 35, 48, 49-51, 53-63.
4. What other metaphors did Jesus use to explain His work for us? John 10:7, 9, 11, 143 14:63 15:1, 5.
5. Give other examples in which Jesus used the verb "to be" in figurative speech. Mark 4:15-18; Luke 12:1.

Explanation: It is interesting to compare the three different accounts of Jesus' statements concerning the bread. Matthew (26:26) and Mark (14:22) record that Jesus said, "Take, eat; this is my body." Luke records that Jesus said, "This is my body which is given for you: do this in remembrance of me" (Luke 22:19). Paul's account is that Jesus said, "Take, eat this is my body, which is broken for you: do this in remembrance of me" (1 Corinthians 11:24). Jesus was reclining at the meal table with His disciples when he spoke these words. His body was not broken (or given) for mankind until the next day. How could Jesus be in substance present in the bread when the total substance of His body was reclining right before their eyes? And how could the substance of His broken physical self be present in the bread when His body was not broken until the next afternoon? If Jesus' statement is to be taken literally, as both Roman Catholic and Lutheran theology takes it, His body would have had to be broken at the point at which He made the statement: "This is my body, which is broken for you." If the bread was literally His physical body in substance, it must also have been literally a broken body. But, as we all know, His body was not broken until Friday afternoon. His statement at the last supper on a Thursday evening pointed forward to His crucifixion. The fact that He added, "This do in remembrance of me," proves that Jesus wanted the future celebration of this service to be a memorial of His body being broken for us on Calvary. The circumstances under which He made His statements regarding the bread and the content of the statements rule out the possibility of Christ's real physical presence in the bread.

Luke records Jesus' statement regarding the cup as follows: "This cup is the new testament in my blood, which is shed for you" (Luke 22:20). Paul's account is as follows: "This cup is the new testament in my blood: this do ye, as oft as ye drink it, in remembrance of me. For as often as ye eat this bread, and drink this cup, ye do shew the Lord's death till he comes" (1 Corinthians 11:25-26). If the statement is to be taken literally, the cup is literally the New Testament (or covenant), an absurd idea. The new covenant is the heart relationship between Christ and His believing people (Hebrews 8:10-13; 9:15). The statement is obviously metaphoric; the cup represents the blood of Christ shed on the cross the day after the last supper. Since the shedding of Christ's blood on the cross made eternally possible the fulfillment of the new covenant promises, the cup also symbolizes the new covenant experience given to those who receive Christ into their hearts by the Holy Spirit. It is quite certain that Jesus was not intending to state that His blood was then and there literally in substance present in the wine. In speaking of His blood, He added, "...which is shed for you." His blood was not shed until the next day. We are told to drink of the cup to "shew the Lord's death," not to declare His real physical presence in the wine.

God believes people enter into the "communion of the blood of Christ" (1 Corinthians 10:16) in the sense that, by partaking in the wine in the Lord's Supper, they unitedly demonstrate that they have accepted Christ's death as being for them. That this is Paul's meaning is demonstrated by his reference to the bread. The bread is "the communion of the body of Christ." If this meant that Christ's body was literally partaken of, we would have to treat the next phrase just as literally. The Greek of verse 17 reads: "Because the Many are one bread, one body; for all eat of [or 'share in] the one bread." Are the believers literally one bread, one body? Indeed no! They are figuratively one bread and one body

because they have, figuratively or spiritually, partaken of the body of Christ. Receiving Christ into their hearts by the Holy Spirit has rendered Christian believers the "body of Christ." (1 Corinthians 12:27 etc.). Since we treat verse 17 of 1 Corinthians 10 as figurative language, in all consistency, we must treat verse 16 likewise.

Jesus' great sermon recorded in John chapter 6 demonstrates beyond any shadow of doubt His symbolic application of the bread and wine. He said, "Except ye eat the flesh of the Son of man, and drink his blood, ye have no life in you" (John 6:53). Jesus' obvious intention throughout this sermon was to urge His followers to be habitual recipients of His presence in their lives. His meaning is quite unmistakably clarified in verse 63: "It is the spirit that quickeneth; the flesh profiteth nothing: the words that I speak unto you, they are spirit, and they are life." Hence, we partake of Christ's body and blood when we receive His teaching in our hearts. This is only possible as we receive the presence of the Holy Spirit. Elsewhere Jesus explained that He would give His people the Holy Spirit: "...for he dwelleth with you and shall be in you. I will not leave you comfortless: I will come to you" (John 14:17-18). "Howbeit when he, the Spirit of truth, is come, he will guide you into all truth" (John 16:13). The point is that partaking of Christ's flesh and blood is the reception of the Holy Spirit into our hearts. He explains Christ's words to us, and mysteriously gives us Christ's holy presence. Eating the bread and wine in the Lord's Supper is a sacred symbol of this spiritual experience.

Those who do not understand Jesus' statements, "This is my body... this is my blood," as figurative should consider other metaphors that He used when speaking of Himself. He said: "I am the door of the sheep" (John 10:7). "I am the good shepherd" (verse 11). "I am the way [hodos = road]" John 14:6). "I am the true vine, and my Father is the husbandman" (John 15:1). "I am the vine, ye are the branches" (verse 5). No one imagines for a moment that any of these statements should be taken literally.

In the parable of the sower, Jesus used the verb "to be" in direct, metaphoric statements, applying the various kinds of seed to the various kinds of people who hear the Gospel (Mark 4:15-18). No one assumes that people are literally seeds falling in different places as they are thrown on the earth by the sower. Likewise in Luke 12:1, we are not intended to conclude that the literal leaven used by the Pharisees in baking their bread was their hypocrisy. Jesus is using leaven as a symbol of their hypocrisy.

Relevance: If we take every Bible statement literally, we are bound to arrive at error. Jesus and His apostles, like the Old Testament prophets, often used figurative language. As we prayerfully seek the guidance of the Holy Spirit, we are able to determine from the context which statements of Scripture are literal and which are figurative. Jesus' statements at the institution of the Lord's Supper are obviously figurative. "This is my body" means, "This represents my body." "This is my blood" means, "This represents my blood." As we partake of the bread and wine (the elements) in the Lord's Supper, we are reminded of Christ's sacrifice, and, in the same service, we renew our spiritual fellowship with Him as we receive the Holy Spirit into our hearts. Since Christ's literal body and blood are not present in the bread and wine, to bow in adoration before them is worship of bread and wine. That is idolatry!

II. Is The Lord's Supper A Sacrifice Of Christ

Obviously, if Christ's body and blood were physically present in the bread and wine, we could conclude that the service is a sacrifice. Since the Bible teaches that the bread and wine are symbols of Christ's body and blood, we must conclude that no sacrifice is involved.

The Word

6. How many sacrifices for human sin did Jesus Christ make? Hebrews 7:27; 9:14, 28; 10:10-14.
7. When did Christ make amends for the sins of the whole world? 1 John 2:2; 4:9-10.
8. Where in the Bible is the teaching that the Lord's Supper is a sacrifice of Christ?

Explanation: The book of Hebrews establishes very clearly that the many animal sacrifices in Judaism pointed to the one sacrifice of Christ on the cross. Repeatedly we are told that Christ's one sacrifice was sufficient for all mankind, for all time (Hebrews 7:27; 9:14, 28; 10:10-14).

Without the slightest reference to the Lord's Supper as a repeated sacrifice, the beloved Apostle John speaks of Christ's death as providing the expiation [the making amends] for the sins of the whole world (1 John 2:2; 4:9-10).

None of the references to the Lord's Supper in the New Testament give any hint at all that the service is a repeated sacrifice of Christ. Calvary was all-sufficient, for all time.

Relevance: Our sins are forgiven as we confess by virtue of Jesus' death for us (1 John 1:7-9). The Lord's Supper is in no way a sacrifice for our sins or for those of the dead. It is a memorial of Calvary, a symbol of our heart union with the Lord, and a reminder that He will return to take believers to His heavenly mansions.

III. Is It Necessary For The Laity To Partake Of Both The Bread And Wine?

This issue has been a source of contention for centuries. John Huss and his followers in the fifteenth century insisted, contrary to Roman Catholic teaching and practice, that communion should be in both kinds; that is, every believer should have the privilege of partaking in both the bread and the wine. In recent times, the Roman Catholic Church has relaxed its policy of denying the cup to the laity. What does the Bible teach on this question?

The Word

9. How many of His disciples did Jesus command to drink of the cup? Matthew 26:27; Luke 22:17.
10. How many of the disciples obeyed Jesus' instruction and drank of the cup? Mark 14:23.
11. How do we know that the laity in the early Christian Church drank of the cup in the Lord's Supper? 1 Corinthians 10:16-17; 11:26-28.

Explanation: Jesus' statement recorded in Matthew 26:27 is correctly translated, as "All drink of it." Jesus instructed the disciples, "Take this, and divide it among yourselves" (Luke 22:17). The disciples' relationship to Christ was an example to us. What He commanded them in the Lord's Supper, as in so many other contexts, applies equally to his followers throughout the ages. Mark records that "they all drank of it" (14:23). Just so, it is Christ's intention that all believers drink of it in the communion service today.

We know from Paul's account in his first epistle to the Corinthians that the early Christian laity drank of the cup in the Lord's Supper service. The communion of the "blood" of Christ, entered into by partaking of the cup, was just as much the privilege of the Corinthian believers as the communion of the "body" of Christ (1 Corinthians 10:16). Verses 26-28 of 1 Corinthians chapter 11 establish the point quite conclusively that the cup was given to all the Corinthian believers. By eating the bread and drinking the cup, they were to "show the Lord's death till he come" (verse 26). The warning regarding drinking the cup unworthily would make very little sense if it had been denied to the laity (verse 27). Paul adds, "But let a man examine himself, and so let him eat of that bread, and drink of that cup" (verse 28). Obviously, the instruction was for the whole church, not just for the clergy.

Relevance: To deny the cup to the laity is to take away a vital part of the symbolism that Jesus established. Every believer has the privilege of partaking spiritually in His ascended Lord. Every Christian may receive Christ into His heart by the Holy Spirit, as he is reminded of Calvary and pointed to the second advent. And the new covenant promises, symbolized by the cup, are for all believers (Matthew 26:27-28).

IV. What Is The Significance Of The Bread?

Since the bread is a symbol given to us by Christ, we do well to search for its real significance.

The Word

12. How do we know that the bread symbolizes Christ's body broken for us on the cross? 1 Corinthians 11:24; Luke 22:19; John 6:51.

13. What indication is there that the bread symbolizes Christ's words or teaching which His followers receive by faith? John 6:63.
14. Why do we conclude that the bread also symbolizes the intimate spiritual relationship between the believer and Christ? John 6:56-57; Colossians 1:27; Romans 8:9-10.
15. Of what future event are we kept constantly aware as we partake of the bread in the Lord's Supper? 1 Corinthians 11:26.

Explanation: The evidence is overwhelming that the bread in the Lord's Supper symbolizes the following:

1. The death of Christ on the cross. Jesus said, "This is my body, which is broken for you" (1 Corinthians 11:24). Paul added, "For as often as ye eat this bread. . . ye do shew the Lord's death..." (verse 26).
2. The teaching of Jesus was received into the heart by the study of the Word and reception of the Holy Spirit (John 6:63).
3. The intimate spiritual relationship between the believer and Christ. As we partake of the symbol of Christ's broken body we dwell in Him, and He dwells in us (John 6:56).
4. The second coming of Christ. By partaking of the bread,

"Ye do shew the Lord's death till he comes" (1 Corinthians 11:26).

Relevance: The bread in the Lord's Supper symbolizes the most important aspects of Christianity: the historical fact of Christ's sacrifice, the experience of having Him live out His life through the believer, and the certainty of His second coming.

V. What Is The Significance Of The Wine?

Obviously, there is an overlap between the meaning of the bread and the wine. Yet the Bible has some additional points to emphasize when the symbol of Christ's blood is discussed.

The Word

16. How do we know that the wine of the Lord's Supper represents Christ's blood shed on Calvary? Matthew 26:28; compare Acts 20:28.
17. What covenant between God and the believer is symbolized by the wine of the Lord's Supper? Matthew 26:28; compare Hebrews 8:10-12.
18. Of what special experience for the repenting sinner is the blood of Christ (and so the wine) a symbol? 1 John 1:7; compare Revelation 7:14; 12:11.
19. How does the wine point us forward to the second coming of Jesus? Matthew 26:29; 1 Corinthians 11:26; John 6:54.

Explanation: The wine of the Lord's Supper is a sacred symbol of:

1. The shedding of Christ's blood on the cross (Matthew 26:28).
2. The everlasting covenant relationship between God and the believer, by which the believer's sins are forgiven, and he is empowered to live a victorious life through the grace of the indwelling Christ (Matthew 26:28; Hebrews 8:10-12).
3. The glorious truth of spiritual cleansing from all sin, and the assurance of total victory in Christ (1 John 1:7; compare Revelation 7:14; 12:11; 22:14; Jude 24).

4. The second coming of Jesus (Matthew 26:29; 1 Corinthians 11:26; John 6:54),

Relevance: Both the wine and the blood are used as symbols throughout Scripture. The important issue is that the wine of the Lord's Supper not only reminds us of Calvary, but also symbolizes the experience of present holiness in Christ, growth in holiness, and total victory over sin before Jesus comes. The everlasting covenant promises are brought into view by the symbol of the wine. This is one reason why, as used by Jesus, it could have been no alcoholic drink. Jesus referred to it as "this fruit of the vine" (Matthew 26:29), which He will drink with us in the Kingdom. No one seriously imagines that there will be alcohol in the heavenly Kingdom.

Have you entered into the spiritual relationship with Christ symbolized by the bread and the wine of the Lord's supper? Are you conscious of His divine presence dwelling in your heart by the Holy Spirit? Jesus invites every human soul to receive Him: "Behold, I stand at the door and knock: if any man hears my voice, and open the door, I will come into him and will sup with him, and he with me" (Revelation 3:20).

Review Questions

1. True or False
 - a. Christ is physically present in the bread and wine of the Lord's Supper.
 - b. Although transubstantiation is not Biblical, consubstantiation is.
 - c. It is not important to give the cup to the laity because Christ is fully present in the Bread.
 - d. The bread and wine are symbols of Christ's death and His spiritual cleansing and power for the believer.
2. Discuss: What differences in the services of some churches would inevitably be made if they accepted the Bible teaching regarding the Lord's Supper.