

“The Lord’s Supper”
(WCF 29:1-2)

WCF 29.1 Our Lord Jesus, in the night wherein He was betrayed, instituted the sacrament of His body and blood, called the Lord's Supper, to be observed in His Church, unto the end of the world for the perpetual remembrance of the sacrifice of Himself in His death, the sealing all benefits thereof unto true believers, their spiritual nourishment and growth in Him, their further engagement in and to all duties which they owe unto Him; and, to be a bond and pledge of their communion with Him, and with each other, as members of His mystical body.

I. When did Christ institute the Lord’s Supper? How long and why are we to observe it?

A. When did Christ institute this sacrament?

1. At the Passover celebration, on the night He was betrayed.
2. “For I received from the Lord that which I also delivered to you, that the Lord Jesus in the night in which He was betrayed took bread; 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.’ In the same way *He took* the cup also after supper, saying, ‘This cup is the new covenant in My blood; do this, as often as you drink *it*, in remembrance of Me’” (1 Cor. 11:23-25).

B. How long are we to observe the Lord’s Supper?

1. We are to observe it until the Lord comes again at the last day.
2. “For as often as you eat this bread and drink the cup, you proclaim the Lord's death until He comes” (v. 26).

C. Why are we to observe the Lord’s Supper?

1. That we might remember His sacrifice: “And when He had taken *some* bread *and* given thanks, He broke it and gave it to them, saying, ‘This is My body which is given for you; do this in remembrance of Me’” (Luke 22:19).
2. That all of His benefits might be sealed to us.
 - a. This is one of its function as a sacrament: a sign of invisible grace, and a seal of God’s promise to bestow that grace to the one who looks to Him in faith.
 - b. The Lord’s Supper reminds us of all that is ours in Christ and reaffirms those promises to us.
3. To remind us that our spiritual nourishment and growth comes from Him.
 - a. “So Jesus said to them, ‘Truly, truly, I say to you, unless you eat the flesh of the Son of Man and drink His blood, you have no life in yourselves. He who eats My flesh and drinks My blood has eternal life, and I will raise him up on the last day. For My flesh is true food, and My blood is true drink’” (John 6:53-55).
 - b. “Is not the cup of blessing which we bless a sharing in the blood of Christ? Is not the bread which we break a sharing in the body of Christ?” (1 Cor. 10:16).
4. To remind us that we are His and what He requires of us.

- a. This is another of its purposes as a sacrament: “Sacraments are holy signs and seals of the covenant of grace, immediately instituted by God, to represent Christ, and His benefits; and to confirm our interest in Him: as also, to put a visible difference between those that belong unto the Church, and the rest of the world; *and solemnly to engage them to the service of God in Christ, according to His Word*” (WCF 27.1).
 - b. The fact that we are welcomed to this holy table, while the world is not, reminds us that we are God’s people – we belong to Him.
 - c. Being His people, then, we are called to holiness of life.
5. To remind us that we are in communion with Him and with each other as members of His body.
- a. The one loaf reminds us that we are all one body in Christ.
 - b. “Since there is one bread, we who are many are one body; for we all partake of the one bread” (1 Cor. 10:17).
 - c. “For even as the body is one and *yet* has many members, and all the members of the body, though they are many, are one body, so also is Christ. For by one Spirit we were all baptized into one body, whether Jews or Greeks, whether slaves or free, and we were all made to drink of one Spirit. For the body is not one member, but many. . . . But now there are many members, but one body. . . . Now you are Christ's body, and individually members of it” (1 Cor. 12:12-14, 20, 27).

WCF 29.2 In this sacrament, Christ is not offered up to His Father; nor any real sacrifice made at all, for remission of sins of the quick or dead; but only a commemoration of that one offering up of Himself, by Himself, upon the cross, once for all: and a spiritual oblation of all possible praise unto God, for the same, so that the popish sacrifice of the mass (as they call it) is most abominably injurious to Christ's one, only sacrifice, the alone propitiation for all the sins of His elect.

II. What is the Lord’s Supper?

A. It is not a re-sacrificing of Christ or a sacrifice at all.

1. Rome appears to believe otherwise.
 - a. “Forasmuch as, under the former Testament, according to the testimony of the Apostle Paul, there was no perfection, because of the weakness of the Levitical priesthood; there was need, God, the Father of mercies, so ordaining, that another priest should rise, according to the order of Melchisedech, our Lord Jesus Christ, who might consummate, and lead to what is perfect, as many as were to be sanctified. He, therefore, our God and Lord, though He was about to offer Himself once on the altar of the cross unto God the Father, by means of his death, there to operate an eternal redemption; nevertheless, because that His priesthood was not to be extinguished by His death, in the last supper, on the night in which He was betrayed,—that He might leave, to His own beloved Spouse the Church, a visible sacrifice, such as the nature of man requires, whereby that bloody sacrifice, once to be accomplished on the cross, might be represented, and the memory thereof remain even unto the end of the world, and its salutary virtue be applied to the remission of those sins which we daily commit,—declaring Himself constituted a priest for ever, according to the order of Melchisedech, He offered up to God the Father His own body and blood under the species of bread and wine; and, under the symbols of those

same things, He delivered (His own body and blood) to be received by His apostles, whom He then constituted priests of the New Testament; and by those words, Do this in commemoration of me, He commanded them and their successors in the priesthood, to offer (them); even as the Catholic Church has always understood and taught. For, having celebrated the ancient Passover, which the multitude of the children of Israel immolated in memory of their going out of Egypt, He instituted the new Passover, (to wit) Himself to be immolated [“offer as a sacrifice by killing”], under visible signs, by the Church through (the ministry of) priests, in memory of His own passage from this world unto the Father, when by the effusion of His own blood He redeemed us, and delivered us from the power of darkness, and translated us into his kingdom. And this is indeed that clean oblation, which cannot be defiled by any unworthiness, or malice of those that offer (it); which the Lord foretold by Malachias was to be offered in every place, clean to his name, which was to be great amongst the Gentiles; and which the apostle Paul, writing to the Corinthians, has not obscurely indicated, when he says, that they who are defiled by the participation of the table of devils, cannot be partakers of the table of the Lord; by the table, meaning in both places the altar. This, in fine [in the end], is that oblation which was prefigured by various types of sacrifices, during the period of nature, and of the law; in as much as it comprises all the good things signified by those sacrifices, as being the consummation and perfection of them all” (Council of Trent, Session 22, Chapter 1, “On the institution of the most holy Sacrifice of the Mass”).

- b. “And forasmuch as, in this divine sacrifice which is celebrated in the mass, that same Christ is contained and immolated in an unbloody manner, who once offered Himself in a bloody manner on the altar of the cross; the holy Synod teaches, that this sacrifice is truly propitiatory and that by means thereof this is effected, that we obtain mercy, and find grace in seasonable aid, if we draw nigh unto God, contrite and penitent, with a sincere heart and upright faith, with fear and reverence. For the Lord, appeased by the oblation thereof, and granting the grace and gift of penitence, forgives even heinous crimes and sins. For the victim is one and the same, the same now offering by the ministry of priests, who then offered Himself on the cross, the manner alone of offering being different. The fruits indeed of which oblation, of that bloody one to wit, are received most plentifully through this unbloody one; so far is this (latter) from derogating in any way from that (former oblation). Wherefore, not only for the sins, punishments, satisfactions, and other necessities of the faithful who are living, but also for those who are departed in Christ, and who are not as yet fully purified, is it rightly offered, agreeably to a tradition of the apostles” (Council of Trent, Session 22, Chapter 2, “That the Sacrifice of the Mass is propitiatory both for the living and the dead”).

2. Westminster affirms the once for all sacrifice of Christ.

- a. This is clearly affirmed in Scripture:
 - (i) “And according to the Law, *one may almost say*, all things are cleansed with blood, and without shedding of blood there is no forgiveness. Therefore it was necessary for the copies of the things in the heavens to be cleansed with these, but the heavenly things themselves with better sacrifices than these. For Christ did not enter a holy place made with hands, a *mere* copy of the true one, but into

heaven itself, now to appear in the presence of God for us; nor was it that He would offer Himself often, as the high priest enters the holy place year by year with blood that is not his own. Otherwise, He would have needed to suffer often since the foundation of the world; *but now once at the consummation of the ages He has been manifested to put away sin by the sacrifice of Himself.* And inasmuch as it is appointed for men to die once and after this *comes* judgment, *so Christ also, having been offered once to bear the sins of many, will appear a second time for salvation without reference to sin, to those who eagerly await Him*” (Heb. 9:22-28).

- (ii) “Every priest stands daily ministering and offering time after time the same sacrifices, which can never take away sins; *but He, having offered one sacrifice for sins for all time, sat down at the right hand of God, waiting from that time onward until His enemies be made a footstool for His feet. For by one offering He has perfected for all time those who are sanctified.* And the Holy Spirit also testifies to us; for after saying, ‘This is the covenant that I will make with them after those days, says the Lord: I will put My laws upon their heart, and on their mind I will write them,’ *He then says, ‘And their sins and their lawless deeds I will remember no more.’* Now where there is forgiveness of these things, there is no longer *any* offering for sin” (Heb. 10:11-18).
- b. Reason also teaches us that one sacrifice of infinite value is enough to atone for an infinite number of sins – more is not needed.

B. It is a commemoration of His once offering Himself.

1. The Lord’s Supper is not a sacrifice, but a memorial of His once-for-all sacrifice.
2. “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.*’ In the same way *He took* the cup also after supper, saying, ‘This cup is the new covenant in My blood; do this, as often as you drink *it*, in remembrance of Me.’ For as often as you eat this bread and drink the cup, *you proclaim the Lord’s death* until He comes” (1 Cor. 11:24-26). Notice His death is proclaimed, not repeated or reenacted.
3. “The *former* priests, on the one hand, existed in greater numbers because they were prevented by death from continuing, but Jesus, on the other hand, because He continues forever, holds His priesthood permanently. Therefore He is able also to save forever those who draw near to God through Him, since He always lives to make intercession for them. For it was fitting for us to have such a high priest, holy, innocent, undefiled, separated from sinners and exalted above the heavens; who does not need daily, like those high priests, to offer up sacrifices, first for His own sins and then for the *sins* of the people, *because this He did once for all when He offered up Himself*” (Heb. 7:23-27). As priest, He continues to intercede on the basis of His sacrifice, He does not repeat it.

C. It is a time to remember and pour out our thankfulness to God.

1. We are to remember what our salvation cost the Lord.
2. And we are to stir ourselves up to give Him our most heartfelt thanks.