

LORD'S DAY 29

Q78. Do the bread and wine become the real body and blood of Christ?

A. No. Just as the water of baptism is not changed into Christ's blood and does not itself wash away sins but is simply a divine sign and assurance of these things,¹ so too the holy bread of the Lord's Supper does not become the actual body of Christ,² even though it is called the body of Christ in keeping with the nature and language of sacraments.³

1. Matt. 26:28–29 – “for this is my blood of the covenant, which is poured out for many for the forgiveness of sins. I tell you, I will never again drink of this fruit of the vine until that day when I drink it new with you in my Father's kingdom.”

Mark 14:24 – “He said to them, ‘This is my blood of the covenant, which is poured out for many.’”

2. 1 Cor. 10:16–17 – “The cup of blessing that we bless, is it not a sharing in the blood of Christ? The bread that we break, is it not a sharing in the body of Christ? Because there is one bread, we who are many are one body, for we all partake of the one bread.”

1 Cor. 11:26–28 – “For as often as you eat this bread and drink the cup, you proclaim the Lord's death until he comes. Whoever, therefore, eats the bread or drinks the cup of the Lord in an unworthy manner will be answerable for the body and blood of the Lord. Examine yourselves, and only then eat of the bread and drink of the cup.”

3. Gen. 17:10 – “This is my covenant, which you shall keep, between me and you and your offspring after you: Every male among you shall be circumcised.”

Gen. 17:14–19 – “‘Any uncircumcised male who is not circumcised in the flesh of his foreskin shall be cut off from his people; he has broken my covenant.’ God said to Abraham, ‘As for Sarai your wife, you shall not call her Sarai, but Sarah shall be her name. I will bless her and also give you a son by her. I will bless her, and she shall give rise to nations; kings of peoples shall come from her.’ Then Abraham fell on his face and laughed and said to himself, ‘Can a child be born to a man who is a hundred years old? Can Sarah, who is ninety years old, bear a child?’ And Abraham said to God, ‘O that Ishmael might live in your sight!’ God said, ‘No, but your wife Sarah shall bear you a son, and you shall name him Isaac. I will establish my covenant with him as an everlasting covenant for his offspring after him.’”

Exod. 12:27 – “you shall say, ‘It is the Passover sacrifice to the Lord, for he passed over the houses of the Israelites in Egypt when he struck down the Egyptians but spared our houses.’” And the people bowed down and worshiped.”

Exod. 12:43–48 – “The Lord said to Moses and Aaron, ‘This is the ordinance for the Passover: no foreigner shall eat of it, but any slave who has been purchased may eat of it after he has been circumcised; no bound or hired servant may eat of it. It shall be eaten in one house; you shall not take any of the animal outside the house, and you shall not break any of its bones. The whole congregation of Israel shall do this. If an alien who resides with you wants to celebrate the Passover to the Lord, all his males shall be circumcised; then he may draw near to celebrate it; he shall be regarded as a native of the land. But no uncircumcised person shall eat of it;”

Exod. 13:9 – “It shall serve for you as a sign on your hand and as a reminder on your forehead, so that the teaching of the Lord may be on your lips, for with a strong hand the Lord brought you out of Egypt.”

Exod. 24:8 – “Moses took the blood and dashed it on the people, and said, ‘Here is the blood of the covenant that the Lord has made with you in accordance with all these words.’”

Exod. 29:36 – “Also every day you shall offer a bull as a purification offering for atonement. Also you shall offer a sin offering for the altar, when you make atonement for it, and shall anoint it, to consecrate it.”

Acts 7:8 – “Then he gave him the covenant of circumcision. And so Abraham became the father of Isaac and circumcised him on the eighth day, and Isaac did likewise to Jacob and Jacob to the twelve patriarchs.”

Acts 22:16 – “And now why do you delay? Get up, be baptized, and have your sins washed away, calling on his name.”

Lev. 16:10 – “but the goat on which the lot fell for Azazel shall be presented alive before the Lord to make atonement over it, that it may be sent away into the wilderness to Azazel.”

Lev. 17:11 – “For the life of the flesh is in the blood, and I have given it to you for making atonement for your lives on the altar, for, as life, it is the blood that makes atonement.”

Isa. 6:6–7 – “Then one of the seraphs flew to me, holding a live coal that had been taken from the altar with a pair of tongs. The seraph touched my mouth with it and said, ‘Now that this has touched your lips, your guilt has departed and your sin is blotted out.’”

Titus 3:5 – “he saved us, not because of any works of righteousness that we had done, but according to his mercy, through the water of rebirth and renewal by the Holy Spirit.”

1 Pet. 3:21 – “And baptism, which this prefigured, now saves you—not as a removal of dirt from the body but as an appeal to God for a good conscience, through the resurrection of Jesus Christ,”

1 Cor. 10:1–4 – “I do not want you to be ignorant, brothers and sisters, that our ancestors were all under the cloud, and all passed through the sea, and all were baptized into Moses in the cloud and in the sea, and all ate the same spiritual food, and all drank the same spiritual drink. For they drank from the spiritual rock that followed them, and the rock was Christ.”

Q79. Why then does Christ call the bread his body and the cup his blood, or the new covenant in his blood, and Paul use the words, a participation in Christ’s body and blood?

A. Christ has good reason for these words. He wants to teach us that just as bread and wine nourish the temporal life, so too his crucified body and poured-out blood are the true food and drink of our souls for eternal life.¹ But more important, he wants to assure us, by this visible sign and pledge, that we, through the Holy Spirit’s work, share in his true body and blood as surely as our mouths receive these holy signs in his remembrance,² and that all of his suffering and obedience are as definitely ours as if we personally had suffered and made satisfaction for our sins.

1. John 6:51 – “I am the living bread that came down from heaven. Whoever eats of this bread will live forever, and the bread that I will give for the life of the world is my flesh.”

John 6:55 – “for my flesh is true food, and my blood is true drink.”

2. 1 Cor. 10:16–17 – “The cup of blessing that we bless, is it not a sharing in the blood of Christ? The bread that we break, is it not a sharing in the body of Christ? Because there is one bread, we who are many are one body, for we all partake of the one bread.”