

Communion

△ Matthew 26: 26-30; 1 Cor 11: 23-24

Intro

History of Communion

Initially remembrance as well as belonging to the body of Christ

In Middle ages the church moved to an understanding that the bread and the wine became the body and blood of Jesus

Transubstantiation

That the substances of bread and wine were transformed at the time of consecration into the substance of Christ's body and blood, even though the outward appearances of the elements were not altered

△ A new Dictionary of Christian Theology, 1983, scm press, page 188

In the Reformation these things were challenged

Consubstantiation

There are two realities present under the appearance of bread and the wine, the food themselves and Christ himself, who could only be known by faith and experienced through the power of grace

△ ihid

Martin Luther adopted this theory and was condemned by the Council of Trent

But radical reformers brought the idea back to remembrance, an

Alternative interpretations

Communion or the Lord's Supper is merely commemorative and symbolic in nature

Or that Christ is received spiritually in some way when communion is devoutly taken

Most protestant churches have settled on one or the other or a mixture

But reject transubstantiation and also a strict interpretation of consubstantiation

The RC stays with that the real presence of Christ is in the elements

The Anglican Church tolerates both the Catholic and Protestant interpretations

However, over the last century all denominations seem to have developed more toleration to each others view points

Allowing many denominations to partake in each others Eucharistic, Communion of the Lord's Supper celebrations

The Lord's supper in the Bible

Matthew 14:22-25, Mark 14:22-25, Luke 22:15-20, 1 Cor 11:23-25

Matthew 14:22-25

Part of the passover celebrations

Therefore in a home situation at a family meal.

Jesus changes the meaning of the Passover meal to sacrifice a lamb for the forgiveness of sins

To focus on himself, Christ, as the passover lamb

When Jesus presents the bread he says

This is my body

Body as a word is not found in Aramaic, but in Greek

In Aramaic, Jesus would have said something like "This is myself"

Saying that the risen Lord is present at the supper

When he presents the Wine

He gave thanks for the wine

This is where the term Eucharist comes from

"Thanks" in Greek

This is the blood of the (new) covenant

Changing the Covenant of the Old Testament, which uses sacrifices to atone for sin and receive forgiveness

Poured out for many

He is alive (i.e. not yet crucified) as he speaks

This is my body

This is my blood

This is my blood
There is a sense that more is going on than just eating bread and drinking wine

It becomes a symbol (or reality) of the sacrifice that Jesus made on the cross

Never drink of the fruit of the vine

Eschatological meaning?

I.e. when he comes again?

Or is he already in the Kingdom of God when he has been raised from the dead or from his ascension?

1 Cor 11:23-26

Paul states this this is what the Lord has given to him

But he relates the story of the passover meal before his betrayal

And we know that he was not there

Did he therefore receive this in his vision of Christ?

Or did the other disciples teaching meant so much to him that he equates their teaching with the Lord's teaching?

Do this in remembrance of me

This phrase appears already in the earliest communion liturgies

Indicating that they used this source instead of the gospels

Remembering the whole story, not just the crucifixion but everything that Jesus

the crucifixion but everything that Jesus has done

Just like the Jews remembered the whole exodus and not only the passover

You proclaim the Lord's death until he comes

Not only preach, but living our whole lives in the new life of Christ

As we become witnesses of Christ living in us

Until he comes: Paul looks forward to Jesus second coming.

Every time believers take part in the supper, they rehearse God's story, who they are and who they are in God's story

^ New Interpreter's Bible, Vol 10, page 935

If they live as they should, their very lives will become a fitting proclamation of the gospel to the world

^ ibid.

This is my body, which is for you

Paul extend the phrase, which is for you

not substitution

But this is for you and for each of you and for you together

Body

In 1 Cor "Body" refers to "Body of Christ"

Which is the Church

¹⁶ Is not the cup of thanksgiving for which we give thanks a participation in the blood of Christ? And is not the bread that we break a

participation in the body of Christ?¹⁷ Because there is one loaf, we, who are many, are one body, for we all share the one loaf.

The word participation = koinonia

Koinonia - 4th work of the Holy Spirit - now translate as fellowship

But was originally translated as communion

This is where the phrase Holy Communion comes from

The fellowship of believers celebrating the Lord's supper

The Body of Christ therefore does for Paul not necessary relate to the physical body of Christ

But to the Spiritual Body of Christ which is the Church

So we not only partake in Christ, but in each other as well!

1 Cor 11:27-33

Paul has made it clear that he has given these instructions before

The Corinthians knew already what they needed to do

But they had distorted the meaning

1 Cor 11:17-22 highlights some of the practices but also the problems

Practice: The Lord's Supper was celebrated during a fellowship meal

¹⁷ In the following directives I have no praise for you, for your meetings do more harm than good. ¹⁸ In the first place, I hear that when you come together as a church,

there are divisions among you, and to some extent I believe it. ¹⁹ No doubt there have to be differences among you to show which of you have God's approval. ²⁰ So then, when you come together, it is not the Lord's Supper you eat, ²¹ for when you are eating, some of you go ahead with your own private suppers. As a result, one person remains hungry and another gets drunk. ²² Don't you have homes to eat and drink in? Or do you despise the church of God by humiliating those who have nothing? What shall I say to you? Shall I praise you? Certainly not in this matter!

^ 1 Cor 11:17-22

Here is also where the term The Lord's Supper originates

So then, when you come together, it is not the Lord's Supper you eat,

^ 1 Cor 11:20

Problem

And it highlights a problem as well

As they have not followed the heart of the Lord's supper

As they were not sharing equally

It was not a bring and share meal, it was a bring and do not share meal

Each brought their own food and drink

The rich got too much the poor not enough and remained hungry

This was not a fellowship

No wonder there was no community, as they were divided and eating divided

The church has solved that problem, by having a symbolic meal, of just a small piece of bread and small glass of wine

Or have we really solved the problem?

But Paul uses this example as an unworthy partaking in the Lord's Supper

Examine yourselves!

Because we are answerable to the body and blood of the Lord

Discern the body

The word body here is also in the context of earlier - the body of Christ

Discern how you fit in with the body of Christ, and acknowledge that you are accountable

Early Reformers took this very seriously

And in the Presbyterian Church of Scotland you had these Communion Tokens

And only if you have received token from the elders you could partake in the Lord's Supper

We do not do this now, as it would be too strict

But some self examination before taking part in Communion, asking for forgiveness for specific things

Or reviewing habits and practices that God does not want us to have, or does want us to do

Discipline and Judgement

Paul even goes so far that he relates illness or death with not having examined ourselves before

But Paul expected Jesus to return before he died

But he does relate to discipline when we are judged by the Lord.

⁷ For the Spirit God gave us does not make us timid, but gives us power, love and self-discipline.

[^] 2 Tim 1:7

Self examination before God results in adjusting our behaviour

And to be disciplined in this behaviour

And communion is a time to do this self examination

Amen