

“The Lord’s Supper”
(WCF 29:3)

WCF 29.3 The Lord Jesus hath, in his ordinance, appointed His ministers to declare His word of institution to the people; to pray, and bless the elements of bread and wine, and thereby to set them apart from a common to an holy use; and to take and break bread, to take the cup and (they communicating also themselves) to give both to the communicants; but to none who are not then present in the congregation.

III. How is the supper to be administered?

A. First, it is to be administered by a minister of the Gospel.

1. Not because the minister is superior to anyone else.
2. But because Christ has called him and set him apart to represent Him in this transaction.
 - a. “And no one takes the honor to himself, but *receives it* when he is called by God, even as Aaron was” (Heb. 5:4).
 - b. The one who administers the sacraments must be authorized by Christ to represent Him, since He is the One who is signifying and sealing this grace to us.

B. Second, the minister is to read the word of institution.

1. The sacraments are visible words, but are mute unless they are explained by Scripture.
2. And so he must give the divine warrant for this practice in worship and explain it.
 - a. “While they were eating, Jesus took *some* bread, and after a blessing, He broke *it* and gave *it* to the disciples, and said, ‘Take, eat; this is My body.’ And when He had taken a cup and given thanks, He gave *it* to them, saying, ‘Drink from it, all of you; for this is My blood of the covenant, which is poured out for many for forgiveness of sins’” (Matt. 26:26-28).
 - b. “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.’ And in the same way *He took* the cup after they had eaten, saying, ‘This cup which is poured out for you is the new covenant in My blood’” (Luke 22:19-20).
 - c. “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.’ For as often as you eat this bread and drink the cup, you proclaim the Lord’s death until He comes” (1 Cor. 11:23-26).
 - d. Notice Jesus not only instituted it, but also explained it.

C. Third, the minister is to pray and ask for God’s blessing.

1. The *Confession* says he is to bless the elements – this is done through the word and prayer, setting them aside from common to sacred use.
2. “In instituting this sacrament, according to the evangelist Matthew, ‘Jesus took bread, and blessed it, and brake it.’ - Matt. xxvi. 26. Some have observed, that it is not necessary for us to understand this as signifying that Jesus blessed *the bread*, for the pronoun *it* is a supplement; and as the word rendered *blessed* sometimes means *to give*

thanks, thanks, especially as the evangelist Luke employs the phrase, ‘he gave thanks,’ they conclude that the two expressions are in this case synonymous; and that we are to understand that Jesus blessed, not the bread, but God, or gave thanks to his Father. We are of opinion, however, that the pronoun *it* has been very properly introduced by our translators after the word *bread*, as it is unquestionably repeated with the utmost propriety after the word *brake*; and we conceive that the order of the words requires us to understand that Jesus blessed *the bread*. Nor is there any more difficulty in apprehending how Jesus *blessed the bread*, than in apprehending how God *blessed the seventh or the Sabbath-day*.—Gen. ii. 3, Exod. xx. 11. Indeed, the two cases are exactly analogous;—God blessed the seventh day by setting it apart to a holy use, or appointing it to be a day of sacred rest; Christ blessed the bread, by setting, it apart from a common to a holy use, or appointing it to be the visible symbol of his body. And while it belonged exclusively to Christ, as the Head of the Church, to appoint bread and wine to be the symbols of his body and blood, yet we are persuaded that the servants of Christ, in administering the Lord’s supper, are warranted, according to the institution and example of Christ, to set apart by solemn prayer so much of the elements as shall be used from a common to a holy use. That there is a sense in, which the servants of Christ may be said to *bless* the elements, seems plain from 1 Cor. x. 16, where Paul denominates the sacramental cup ‘The cup of blessing which we bless.’ It is not pretended that any real change is thereby made upon the elements, but only a relative change, so that they are not to be looked upon as common bread and wine, but as the sacred symbols of Christ’s body and blood.”

D. The minister is to break the bread and take the cup, and give both to the communicants.

1. The minister is to break the bread.
 - a. This is how Christ instituted and administered it.
 - (i) “While they were eating, Jesus took *some* bread, and after a blessing, He broke *it* and gave *it* to the disciples, and said, ‘Take, eat; this is My body’” (Matt. 26:26).
 - (ii) The bread is a symbol or figure of His body, wounded, bruised and crucified to atone for our sins. An unbroken Christ would not benefit us. To use preformed wafers – as Rome does – to represent His body without breaking contradicts what it is to symbolize.
 - b. This breaking is so essential to the administration of the Table that it is sometimes referred to as “breaking the bread.”
 - (i) “They were continually devoting themselves to the apostles’ teaching and to fellowship, to the breaking of bread and to prayer” (Acts 2:42).
 - (ii) “On the first day of the week, when we were gathered together to break bread, Paul *began* talking to them, intending to leave the next day, and he prolonged his message until midnight” (Acts 20:7).
2. The minister is also to take the cup – which represents His blood – and give both elements to the communicants.
 - a. The giving and receiving of both elements was practiced by the church for about 1400 years, until Rome took the cup away at the Council of Constance (1414-1418).

- b. “The Council of Constance decreed, ‘that though Christ did administer this venerable sacrament to his disciples under both the kinds of bread and wine, yet notwithstanding this, the custom of communicating under one kind only is now to be taken for a law.’ And, ‘Though, in the primitive Church, this sacrament was received by the faithful under both kinds, yet, notwithstanding this, the custom that is introduced of communicating under one kind only for the laity is now to be taken for a law.’ The Council of Trent also declared, ‘That the laity, and the clergy not officiating, are not bound by any divine precept, to receive the sacrament of the eucharist under both kinds.’ ‘And further declares, that although our Redeemer in the last supper instituted this sacrament in two kinds, and so delivered it to the apostles, yet under one kind only, whole, and entire Christ and the true sacrament are taken; and that, therefore, those who receive only one kind are deprived of no grace necessary to salvation.’ The Church of Rome, it will be remarked, acknowledges both kinds, the bread and the wine, to have been instituted by Christ, and the ordinance to have been thus celebrated in primitive times; she is, therefore, guilty of an avowed opposition to the authority of Christ, has sacrilegiously mutilated this holy sacrament, and infringed the privileges of the Christian people. The command of Christ to drink the wine is as express as the command to eat the bread; nay, as foreseeing how, in after ages, this ordinance would be dismembered by the prohibition of the cup to the laity, he is even more explicit in his injunction concerning the cup than the bread. Of the bread, he simply said, ‘Take, eat;’ but when he gave the cup, he said, ‘Drink ye all of it.’—Matt. xxvi. 26, 27. According to the divine institution, therefore, both the elements are to be given to all the communicants. And as really as the bread and wine are given to the communicants, so Christ gives himself, with all his benefits, to the worthy receivers; and in taking these elements—in eating the bread and drinking the wine they profess to receive Christ by faith, and to rest their hope of pardon and salvation solely upon his death” (Shaw, *The Reformed Faith*).
3. The minister, however, is not to give the elements to those who are not present.
- We must be present to hear the word of institution that gives meaning to the elements, that we might take hold of the promised help by faith.
 - One of the purposes of the Table is to remind us that we are in communion with one another as members of Christ’s body. To celebrate it alone is a contradiction.
 - This is why we do not serve anyone outside the service, such as those who might be in the nursery. They must be present with the body and hear the word of institution.
 - What if someone misses the sacrament? Do they miss out on grace?
 - They miss out on that particular blessing of grace, but not on grace altogether.
 - God gives the same grace through His other means.

E. How often should we celebrate the Lord’s Supper?

- The pattern of the early church was to celebrate the supper when they met for worship on the Lord’s Day.
 - We’ve seen the Lord’s Supper is often called the breaking of the bread.
 - “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).

- (ii) “They *began* to relate their experiences on the road and how He was recognized by them in the breaking of the bread” (Luke 24:35).
 - (iii) “They were continually devoting themselves to the apostles’ teaching and to fellowship, to the breaking of [the] bread and to prayer” (Acts 2:42).
 - (iv) “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).
 - b. This is something the early church was observing on a weekly basis.
 - (i) “On the first day of the week, when we were gathered together to break bread, Paul *began* talking to them, intending to leave the next day, and he prolonged his message until midnight” (Acts 20:7).
 - (ii) “Therefore when you meet together, it is not to eat the Lord’s Supper” (1 Cor. 11:20).
2. Argument from possessive adjective (*kuriakos*: “belonging to the Lord”).
- a. This adjective is used only twice in the NT – once to refer to the Lord’s Day and once to refer to the Lord’s Supper.
 - (i) “I was in the Spirit on the Lord’s Day, and I heard behind me a loud voice like *the sound* of a trumpet” (Rev. 1:10).
 - (ii) “Therefore when you meet together, it is not to eat the Lord’s Supper” (1 Cor. 11:20).
 - b. The Lord has been pleased to call these two particular institutions His own.
 - (i) The Lord’s Supper commemorates His death.
 - (ii) The Lord’s Day commemorates His resurrection.
 - (iii) Our salvation depends on both and so the Lord wants us to remember both every week.
3. What are the arguments against celebrating the Lord’s Supper on a weekly basis?
- a. The Table is holy, but we are not: we need time to prepare, so that we do not come flippantly.
 - (i) We’ll never be good enough in ourselves to come to the Table.
 - (ii) The Lord bids us come to the Table to receive grace that we might be better.
 - b. The Bible doesn’t tell us how often we should observe it, so once a month or once every two or three months is acceptable.
 - (i) The examples in Scripture contradict this.
 - (ii) This also may betray a lack of desire for the Table.
 - c. If we celebrate it too often, it will lose its significance.
 - (i) The same could be said of any ordinance we practice on a weekly or daily basis.
 - (ii) The Lord’s Supper is a very important means of grace that should be used more often than it is, especially since the warning attached to it forces us to a closer examination of our lives than the other ordinances.