

Heidelberg Catechism 67-68–The Holy Sacraments

Brothers and Sisters in Jesus Christ: People are always excited about when a baby or a new member is baptized. And that is good. But far too many people see baptism in the wrong way. They see baptism as a Rite of Passage – an important date to remember. Others see Baptism as a ticket to heaven. Those are wrong views of baptism. Baptism must always be viewed in light of what and whom it represents: The sacrifice of the Lord Jesus Christ.

There are similar errors regarding the Lord's Supper. Some believe they must make extra preparations for the Lord's Supper than they normally do for other Sabbaths. By making extra preparation for the Lord's Supper they diminish the importance of the preached Word. (This is one of the problems in not having the Lord's Supper every week as in history.) Furthermore, the Lord's Supper is not about Christians worthiness to take it. No Christian is worthy of himself to take the Lord's Supper. Christians must view the Lord's Supper in light of whom it represents, the Lamb of God, who had to be killed for their freedom. 1 Corinthians does not raise the level of the Lord's Supper above the preaching by demanding that you examine yourself before participating. It raises the level of the Lord's Supper so you prepare as you prepare for preaching.

Today we will hear from God's Words about the focus you must have when participating or witnessing the celebration of Baptism and the Lord's Supper.

Our headings are: The Focus of the Sacraments 圣礼, and the Number of the Sacraments.

Our Goals are: That you will not see the Sacraments in an individualistic 个人主义性的 or superstitious 迷信的 way, but that you will always be drawn to the saving work of Jesus Christ when you witness or participate in a sacrament.

The Focus of the Sacraments

67 Q. ARE BOTH THE WORD AND THE SACRAMENTS THEN INTENDED TO FOCUS OUR FAITH ON THE SACRIFICE OF JESUS CHRIST ON THE CROSS AS THE ONLY GROUND OF OUR SALVATION?

A. Right! In the gospel the Holy Spirit teaches us and through the holy sacraments he assures us that our entire salvation rests on Christ's one sacrifice for us on the cross.

1. All Scriptures focus upon the work of your Savior. His work was to redeem man from sin.

Luke 24:24 Then He said to them, "O foolish ones, and slow of heart to believe in all that the prophets have spoken! 26 "Ought not the Christ to have suffered these things and to enter into His glory?" 27 And beginning at Moses and all the Prophets, He expounded 阐述 to them in all the Scriptures the things concerning Himself. 44 Then He said to them, "These are the words which I spoke to you while I was still with you, that all things must be fulfilled which were written in the Law of Moses and the Prophets and the Psalms concerning Me."

The Jews (and Jesus' disciples) thought that when Bible spoke of redemption that God meant that Jesus would re-establish an earthly kingdom for the Jews, redeem them, and make them into a great nation on earth again.

2. Not surprisingly then, the Sacraments (baptism & the Lord's Supper) focus like a laser beam 激光束 solely upon the work of Jesus Christ... particularly upon the central part of his work – his dying and his resurrection.

a. In Romans 6, shows that baptism symbolizes your unity in Jesus Christ's work on the cross.

Romans 6: 3 Or do you not know that as many of us as were baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into His death?

Your sins were washed away when Christ's blood was shed. Apostle Paul taught that baptism was picture of the covering Christ is to you...that covering of righteousness. The law previously covered Christians with guilt. So Apostle Paul pointed out that baptism points directly to the protection Jesus offered. (Adam and Eve were covered with the skin of the sacrificed animals.)

Galatians 3: 27 For as many of you as were baptized into Christ have put on Christ.

b. 1 Corinthians 11, describes the Lord's Supper as a testimony that Jesus Christ died on the cross for sinners. The bread pictures his body and the wine pictures his blood – the means of your covering.

1 Corinthians 11: 26 For as often as you eat this bread and drink this cup, you proclaim the Lord's death till He comes.

c. Apostle Paul taught that the Israelites were united (baptized) with Moses when they passed through the Red Sea and were under the cloud. And he then used that to teach the Corinthians that the Israelites who were united in baptism, were eating Christ's body and drinking his blood, pictured in the Lord's Supper, believing that Jesus would die for their sins.

1 Corinthians 10:1 Moreover, brethren, I do not want you to be unaware that all our fathers were

under the cloud, all passed through the sea, 2 **all were baptized into Moses** in the cloud and in the sea, 3 **all ate the same spiritual food**, 4 **and all drank the same spiritual drink**. For they drank of that spiritual Rock that followed them, and that **Rock was Christ**.

So Jesus Christ is inextricably 有着千丝万缕地 linked to the Sacraments. If the sign is treated too highly, then the sign becomes more important than the thing signified. The “thing” signified is the Lord Jesus Christ himself.

3. The sacraments are a means then of grace from Jesus Christ. They are holy, visible, sensible, **signs of the invisible grace you receive**. Sacraments are **holy visible seals of the Covenant** of Grace that **God established with his people**. How could they be a means of grace? The sacraments scream out to you and the world: “Jesus loves you, and this is what he did for you.” And you then respond: “I love to tell this story.” So the advancement of the kingdom is a result of the grace you receive from the Word and the Sacraments.

4. So when you are baptized or you see someone baptized, and when you eat of the Lord’s Table, or you see someone eat at the Lord’s Table, let your mind be drawn back to the cross where the Lord suffered and his blood dripped down... The Sacraments are about Jesus Christ. This will move you to love him more and serve him better. In this way, you will see the Sacraments are a means of grace. And you will tell the world that they too can be nourished 滋养 by Christ. You will be preaching to the world... See why you need to invite others to come and hear and see Christ’s work!

The Number of the Sacraments

68 Q. HOW MANY SACRAMENTS DID CHRIST INSTITUTE IN THE NEW TESTAMENT?

A. Two: baptism and the Lord’s supper.

1. There are only two sacraments in the Bible, regardless what other religions teach. The 2 are Baptism and the Lord’s Supper. These 2 were commanded by Jesus Christ.

a. Baptism.

Matthew 28:19 "Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, 20 "teaching them to observe all things that I have commanded you; and lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the age." Amen.

b. Lord’s Supper

1Corinthians 11: 23 For I received from the Lord that which I also delivered to you: that the Lord Jesus on the same night in which He was betrayed took bread; 24 and when He had given thanks, He broke it and said, "Take, eat; this is My body which is broken for you; do this in remembrance of Me." 25 In the same manner He also took the cup after supper, saying, "This cup is the new covenant in My blood. This do, as often as you drink it, in remembrance of Me." 26 For as often as you eat this bread and drink this cup, you proclaim the Lord’s death till He comes.

2. What are some other “sacraments” that other sects and religions have, and why are they not properly called sacraments?

a. Some Charismatic 灵恩派的 churches have a sacrament call foot-washing. They believe that when Jesus washed his disciples’ feet and said that they were to do likewise, that Jesus was instituting a new sacrament call foot-washing. Jesus was speaking of being humble and serving each other. He was not speaking of literally washing each other’s feet. This was not a new sacrament. Sacraments are signs that point to the literal act of Jesus dying – where blood was shed- for the sins of his people. It is impossible to see how this would apply. It is taught no other place in the Bible.

b. Roman Catholics have 7 Sacraments: Baptism, Confirmation 证实礼, Eucharist 圣餐, Extreme Unction 给临终者涂油礼, Holy Orders 圣职, Marriage, and Penance 赎罪, 使以苦行赎罪. None of these so-called sacraments represent what Christians believe.

Baptism for the Roman Catholic is different from Christian baptism. Roman Catholics believe that one is saved by baptism – or baptismal regeneration 洗礼再生.

Confirmation is the belief that one has become fully equipped with the Holy Spirit. Since this sign does not picture the work of Christ at his death, it cannot be a sacrament.

Eucharist, Thanksgiving or the Mass, is the most shameful doctrine of Roman Catholicism. It is an abominable sacrament. Roman Catholics believe that Christ is not symbolized by the bread and

wine, but the bread and the wine is transferred into the literal flesh and blood of Jesus Christ... whom they must sacrifice daily. Ironically, the word “mass” comes from the Latin phrase “Ite, missa est,” which is translated: “It is finished.” Yet they continue to sacrifice Christ daily, claiming that his once for all times sacrifice was not sufficient 足够 (Hebrews 7:27, 9:28, 10:10) Extreme Unction is the Roman Catholic anointing with special oil anyone who is sick or possibly facing death and is supposed to give him special grace. It is important to pray for the sick to get better, but we have no such command, and further, this does not picture the work of Christ’s payment for sins.

Holy Orders are special positions in the Roman Catholic Church (bishops, priests, and deacons). Obviously these do not picture the work of Christ on the cross. No Christian needs a priests since the Lord said that we are all priests.

1Peter 2:9 But you are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, His own special people, that you may proclaim the praises of Him who called you out of darkness into His marvelous light;

Marriage is a Roman Catholic sacrament and this is why they do not permit divorces. And yet, if marriage were a sacrament and a picture of Christ’s pure love for his church, why would Roman Catholics permit mixed marriages – non-Roman Catholics- with only a bishop’s permission? Isn’t that a corruption? And if sacraments are not optional, why are priests not allowed to marry?

Penance is when a Roman Catholic goes to a priest, makes an act of contrition 悔悟 verbally, and then the priest absolves 免除, 开脱 him. As a punishment, you are required to repetitiously 反覆 pray certain prayers. But prayers are the chief means of showing our thankfulness to the Lord. How can it then be a punishment? Furthermore, you are to confess your sins to God. Only God forgives sins. There are so many wrong things with this!

c. Mormons believe that they could baptize the dead....by baptizing someone who is alive. It is lawful for them to baptize by proxy 代理 because they believe that baptism is required to enter into Paradise. Of course no one can receive faith after he has died. After death is the judgment.

d. There are some who recognize the Sacraments of the Lord, but they themselves do not participate in them. They may simply pass the elements of the Lord’s Supper around but no one would take it. We will talk more about them later.

Conclusion:

The Sacraments, baptism and the Lord’s Supper, **focus on the saving work of Jesus Christ** for you. The Sacraments of themselves are **not to be inappropriately elevated** 被不当地提升; or they will become sinful, as they take away from the thing signified 标志性的. The Sacraments are not to be ignored, or the full meaning brushed aside, or you will rob yourself the grace that comes from them.

Brothers and Sisters in Jesus Christ: 1. When you see someone baptized or when you participate in the Lord’s Supper, let it take you back to the cross and see the blood of Christ dripping to the ground...the blood that made you clean...and let that sink into your heart...eat it as spiritual food...that it might nourish you. Let the Sacraments scream out: “The Lord died for you,” so that you never forget it. 2. Don’t ever get tired of the sacraments. Look forward to them. Don’t rob yourself of one of the greatest motivations to serving the Lord with vigor. 3. Let the Sacraments be a witness to the world. Let them see you nourished...and live well...and then let them ask: How are you so peaceful in a world of strife?

Finally, if you are not a Christian, the Sacraments might be great signs and seals, and sources of blessings, but you can’t have them. You can’t have them because you have a greater problem. You need to understand and accept the thing symbolized by the Sacraments...the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ. I pray that this greatest need of your life will be met today. Just ask God for his help!