

Belgic Confession 35–Lord’s Supper–Participation and Preparation

Brothers and Sisters in Jesus Christ: Today you will hear how you must prepare for and participate in the Lord’s Supper.

Our headings are:

Preparation and Participation in the Passover

Preparation and Participation in the Lord’s Supper

Our goals are: **That you will learn how to get the maximum benefit from the Lord’s Supper so that you will be more equipped to serve the Lord better.**

Lastly, we **receive this holy sacrament in the assembly of the people of God, with humility and reverence**, keeping up among us a **holy remembrance of the death of Christ** our Savior, **with thanksgiving**, making there **confession of our faith** and of the Christian religion.

Therefore **no one ought to come to this table without having previously rightly examined himself**, lest by eating of this bread and drinking of this cup he eat and drink judgment to himself. In a word, we are moved by the use of this holy sacrament to a fervent love towards God and our neighbor. **Those who are in good relations with the Lord are permitted, and encouraged to come to the table of the Lord and feast.**

Preparation and Participation in the Passover

1. The Passover was established in 1400’s BC in Egypt. Ex12. As Israel approached the exodus from Egypt, God required that each **family kill a spotless lamb** and **daub the blood of the lamb** on their door posts (a public testimony of faith).

They would then eat the roasted lamb (bloodshed, sacrifice), with **unleavened bread**–(liberation from pollution), and **bitter herbs** (suffering).

Because this sacrificial lamb pointed to the Lamb of God who would die on Calvary, none of the meat was ever wasted. The meal was notably **eaten in close communion and in a home with other brethren**. This was a reminder that only in the church of God would you find the means of grace. You don’t get grace by spending time in nature.

2. Those who ate of the Passover lamb were saved from judgment when the Angel of Death passed over Egypt. This feast was symbolic of deliverance from sin, death, and hell.
Those who refused the Passover lamb lost their firstborn son. This was God’s justice on the wicked for refusing his food.

3. Yet, many gained protection of God even though they did not themselves participate in the Passover, Israel's covenant meal: Foreigners, ceremonially unclean – like those who touched a dead body, or those having just given birth, and infants.

Exodus 12:43 And the LORD said to Moses and Aaron, "This is the ordinance of the Passover: No foreigner shall eat it. 44 "But every man's servant who is bought for money, when you have circumcised him, then he may eat it. 45 "A sojourner and a hired servant shall not eat it.

God was not against the **foreigners or temporary residents** because they were from a different country or race, but he would not share the sign of the covenant with those who were not his children and had not taken the mark of circumcision. To give the Passover to the uncircumcised would mean that his sacred bond would have been profaned by strangers. No one would give a thief the key to his house so he could take your possessions. And yet, God graciously provided a way for future participation for those who came to believe in the Savior.

Exodus 12:47 ...And when a stranger dwells with you and **wants to keep the Passover** to the LORD, let **all his males be circumcised, and then let him come near and keep it**; and he shall be as a native of the land. For no uncircumcised person shall eat it.

The **ceremonially unclean** were unfit to take it, but could come the next time.

4. What about children? Children received the Passover blessing but not the Passover bread. How do we know that?

a. The Passover was not designed for children. All feasts were designed by God for a specific purpose. For example: Circumcision was designed for boys but not for girls. Further, would an infant eat roasted meat? Would you feed your newborn bitter herbs? Would he eat (not suck) hard unleavened bread dipped in bitter herbs? After someone gives birth and starts to enjoy a medium rare steak, will she share it with her 1 week old baby? We know he can't digest hard foods. The Passover was a reasonable signs that matched the intended design. **The Passover would have been harmful to a child.**

b. Theological conclusion. Children were not required to partake. First, **while circumcision marked a child's entry in the covenant, the Passover marked his personal standing in the covenant.** The 2 sacraments had 2 different applications.

Second, children lacked the understanding – which was required – to participate in the Passover. Children did not understand what the parents were doing but **adults were required to know** and even explain.

Exodus 12:26 "And it shall be, when your children say to you, 'What do you mean by this service?' 27 "that you shall say, 'It is the Passover

sacrifice of the LORD, who passed over the houses of the children of Israel in Egypt when He struck the Egyptians and delivered our households.” So the people bowed their heads and worshiped.

c. Historical conclusion. Children had to be able to be trained and make a public profession of faith. (This fits in with the above - knowledge.) Participation in the Passover was linked to their Bar and Bat Mitzvah. Jesus went up to Jerusalem to celebrate the feasts for the first time when he was 12 years old.

Luke 2:41 His parents went to Jerusalem every year at the Feast of the Passover. 42 And when He was twelve years old, they went up to Jerusalem according to the custom of the feast.

d. Logical conclusion. Children, foreigners, and other unclean persons were notably excluded from the Passover, but included in the 2 other major feasts – Feast of Weeks and Tabernacles. This is most significant and is consistent with the interpretation that children did not participate in the Passover meal – and yet receive covenant protection.

Deuteronomy 16:11 "You shall rejoice before the LORD your God, **you and your son and your daughter**, your male servant and your female servant, the Levite who is within your gates, the stranger and the fatherless and the widow who are among you... ¹⁴ "And you shall rejoice in your feast, you and **your son and your daughter**, your male servant and your female servant and the Levite, the stranger and the fatherless and the widow, who are within your gates.

5. There are some who **have argued that children did participate in the Passover and they use 2 passage to try to prove their point.**

Exodus 12:4 ‘And if the household is too small for the lamb, let him and his neighbor next to his house take it according to the number of the persons; according to **each man’s need** you shall make your count for the lamb.

“Each man’s need” literally means “according to the mouth of eating.” The point was not about the number of people in the house, but that the lamb was not be wasted! They had to count the eaters. If a lamb was suited for 10 people, then people had to be there.

The other verse says “all Israel” ate the Passover. But we have already established that foreigners, temporary workers, and unclean persons could not eat it. Further, the word “all” is often used in a general sense. For example, “all the congregation” grumbled against Moses. Did babies grumble? Number 14:1-2, Joshua 22:12. In fact, children were not included in the initial counting of those who were counted. Look at verse 37.

Preparation and Participation in the Lord's Supper

1. With the sacrifice of Christ removing the need for bloody animal sacrifice, Jesus introduced a non-bloody sign – the Lord's Supper-wine, which replaced the blood, and bread, which replaced the meat and bitter herb.

Matthew 26:26 ...Jesus took bread, blessed and broke it, and gave it to the disciples and said, "Take, eat; this is My body." 27 Then He took the cup, and gave thanks, and gave it to them, saying, "Drink from it, all of you. 28 "For this is My blood of the new covenant...

Quick question: Did Jesus and his Apostles use wine or grape juice? Some object to using wine because they believe that God is against the use of alcohol. God isn't against the use of alcohol. Jesus made wine. Jesus drank wine. Wine was a sign of blessing. God only condemned drunkenness – like he condemned gluttony. Can you imagine people getting drunk on grape juice, as some were in Corinth? (1Cor 11) Can you imagine how they would have preserved grape juice without canning or freezing?

2. To enjoy this meal you must examine yourself. See if there is sin. Remember what Jesus has done for you. You have to make sure the leaven (yeast - sin) is removed. Repent. Come. **So take the time to prepare.**

1Corinthians 11:26 For as often as you eat this bread and drink this cup, you proclaim the Lord's death till He comes. 27 Therefore whoever eats this bread or drinks this cup of the Lord in an unworthy manner will be guilty of the body and blood of the Lord. 28 But **let a man examine himself**, and so let him eat of the bread and drink of the cup. 29 For he who eats and drinks in an **unworthy manner eats and drinks judgment to himself**, not discerning the Lord's body. 30 For this reason many are weak and sick among you, and many sleep. 31 For if we would judge ourselves, we would not be judged. 32 But when we are judged, we are chastened by the Lord, that we may not be condemned with the world.

Elders are to **call each believer to regularly examine himself** and make sure that he is fully aware of Christ's work for him. **You see, when you examine yourself, you will see your sins and confess them. Then you will be in good relationship with the one who was your sacrifice.**

3. But being in a good relationship with the Lord does not mean you are perfect or have perfectly obeyed God's law. No one then would then be able to eat...but believers are to eat of it...who come with repentance.

4. After examination and confession, you will eat (by faith) his crucified body and drink (by faith) his shed blood with your fellow brothers and sisters. This fellowship meal

is a testimony to each other and the world that you are saved by Jesus. It is like putting his blood on the doorposts of your life. It is like a profession of faith.

5. Elders must guard the table of the Lord from those who are not following the Lord.

Why?

a. The Lord's Supper is not theirs to give. It is the Lord's and he says who should receive it.

1Corinthians 10:21 You cannot drink the cup of the Lord and the cup of demons; you cannot partake of the Lord's table and of the table of demons.

22 Or do we provoke the Lord to jealousy?

b. If elders allowed an unworthy eater to participate in this holy meal **it would dishonor the covenant and the God** who gave that covenant. It is to spit at the work of Christ and treat his redemption of man as an insignificant thing.

c. Elders must withhold the Lord's Supper from an unworthy recipient for his own good.

1Corinthians 11:27 Therefore whoever eats this bread or drinks this cup of the Lord in an unworthy manner will be guilty of the body and blood of the Lord. **29** For he who eats and drinks in an unworthy **manner eats and drinks judgment to himself**, not discerning the Lord's body. **30** For this reason many **are weak and sick among you, and many sleep.**

God put Adam and Eve out of the Garden of Eden lest they would have eaten of the Tree of Life.

Yet, elders must remind those who are in rebellion that they are under the condemnation of God and must return to him and ask God to make them his children and give them his holy food.

Isaiah 1:11 "To what purpose is the multitude of your sacrifices to Me?" Says the LORD. **"I have had enough of burnt offerings of rams And the fat of fed cattle.** I do not delight in the blood of bulls, Or of lambs or goats. **15** When you spread out your hands, I will hide My eyes from you; Even though you make many prayers, I will not hear. Your hands are full of blood.**16** **"Wash yourselves, make yourselves clean; Put away the evil of your doings from before My eyes. Cease to do evil,** **17** Learn to do good; Seek justice, Rebuke the oppressor; Defend the fatherless, Plead for the widow.

5. The Lord's Supper continues as a perpetual remembrance of the Lord's death and a source of nourishment until the end.

6. What about children? If children are baptized, why can't they take the Lord's Supper?

a. As with the Passover, the Lord's Supper was not designed for children. Who gives an infant a cup of wine to drink? Would you let an infant slurp from a cup of wine? And since the Passover flows to the Lord's Supper, the other principles remain the same. (It is an innovation to think that children can such on the bread soaked in wine.)

b. To participate in the Lord's Supper, a child must be able to examine himself to see if he is right with God. (We don't teach baptismal regeneration!) He must **ask the question**: Why are you doing this? And he must be able to **understand the answer**. And he must be able to proclaim the Lord's death...as is required. (This is like painting the doorposts of his house.) He must be able feed on Christ. Great judgment is reserved for unworthy receivers. This is why **John Calvin called Paedo-communion a poison to the children**. Infants do not properly discern the Lord's body and will bring judgment on themselves. Children can't keep the obligations to the covenant.

1Corinthians 11:26 For as often as you eat this bread and drink this cup, you **proclaim the Lord's death** till He comes. 27 Therefore whoever eats this bread or drinks this cup of the Lord in **an unworthy manner** will be guilty of the body and blood of the Lord.28 But **let a man examine himself...**

Conclusion:

The Passover, the precursor to the Lord's Supper, required purity of the body and a proclamation of faith in the coming Savior. The Lord's Supper requires purity of the heart and a proclamation of faith in the Savior who came.

Brothers and Sisters:

1. The Lord's Supper is not something to treat lightly. Yes, we use a piece of bread and some wine, but when you receive this by faith, the benefits are enormous. It strengthens your soul. And you need strong souls to fight against the Devil, the world, and your flesh. If you don't participate in the Lord's Supper you will be weak and sickly.

2. Publicly speak of what that Lord's Supper symbolizes – the death of the Savior on the cross. Let it be that blood on your doorposts so the world can learn of Jesus and be saved.

Finally: If Jesus' blood is not on your doorposts, if you can't make a public testimony that the blood of Christ is on your life, you will die and go to hell. Do you want to go to the fires of hell for eternity? If not, then ask God to apply Christ's blood to your soul. Then, and only then, you can be freed from the Angel of Death.