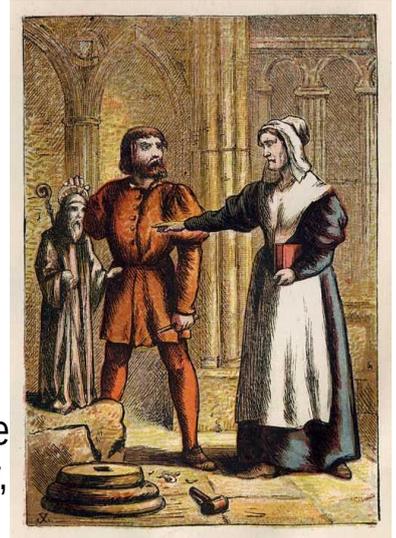


1. COMMUNION: A DANGEROUS PLACE

In August 1557 Agnes Prest was martyred by being burnt at the stake in Exeter under the reign of Queen Mary, because she denied the RC teaching of transubstantiation – the idea that a priest has the power to transform the bread and wine into Jesus' actual, flesh and blood, body.

At the Reformation, people were prepared to die for the sake of a right understanding of the Lord's Supper.

How things have changed: In a typical vague 21stC church a bloke will casually stand up to give thanks for the bread or wine and say, "Father, we thank you for dying on the cross to save us"! ¹



Agnes Prest in Foxe's Book of Martyrs, 1887 edition.

1 Corinthians 11:27-31 Whoever, therefore, eats the bread or drinks the cup of the Lord in an unworthy manner will be guilty concerning the body and blood of the Lord. ²⁸ Let a person examine himself, then, and so eat of the bread and drink of the cup. ²⁹ For anyone who eats and drinks without discerning the body^{fn 2} eats and drinks judgement on himself. ³⁰ That is why many of you are weak and ill, and some have died. ³¹ But if we judged ourselves truly, we would not be judged. ESV

Q2. Is the Lord's supper still a dangerous place nowadays?

v27

v29

v30

v31

We must eat and drink in a careful manner, examining and judging ourselves, and recognising the body of the Lord:

1 Corinthians 10:17 Because there is one loaf, we, who are many, are one body, for we all share the one loaf. NIV

There are both corporate (corpus=body) and personal dimensions to the Lord's supper. We can only be careful with this dangerous means of grace if we understand it. So, ...

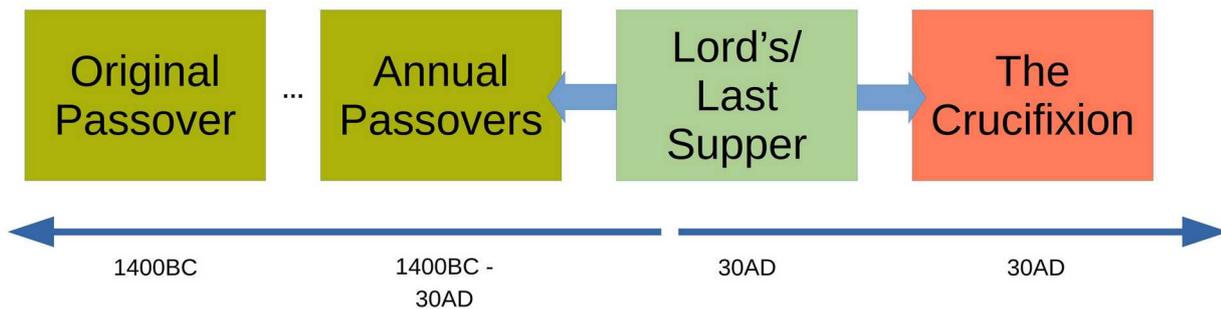
¹ This is actually a 3rdC heresy called 'patripassionism'.

² v29 Recognise/discern the body – could be referring to God's people as per 1 Corinthians 10:17 or to Jesus' body as represented by the bread, or even to both.

2. WHY ARE THERE TWO 'ELEMENTS'?

To understand communion, we must understand why there are two elements: bread and wine.

Matthew 26:26 And as they were eating,... [the Passover meal = context] ESV



The Lord's supper was instituted by Jesus at the Passover meal. What happened?

They selected a perfect passover lamb and lived with it for 2 weeks. The lamb was **first** slaughtered, and then **secondly** its blood was painted on the door frames.

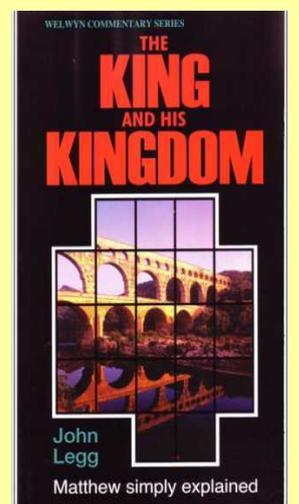
There were two stages. First there was a sacrifice, then an offering.

First, there is a sacrifice and then the blessing flows; first the payment and then the benefit.

'It is important to note that Jesus gave two symbols with respect to his death: bread and wine. They must be considered separately, because Christ kept them separate.

***The bread**, pointing to Christ's suffering in death, speaks of bearing our guilt and enduring our punishment, the wrath of God. It refers to his death as a substitute, dying in our place, just as the Passover lamb died in the place of the first-born Israelite, and subsequent lambs, bulls and goats died in the place of the sinner who offered them.*

*In every sacrifice there is then a second stage. **The blood** of the Passover lamb had to be applied to the door-posts and lintels of the houses. This symbolised the presentation of the offering to God for his acceptance.'*³



Q. Can you imagine being a first-born Jew in Egypt, hoping that the Destroyer would pass over your house and not slay you as happened to the Egyptians? Would you be trusting the blood of the lamb?

Because God accepts the blood of the Lamb, the benefits are received by the participants.

In the same way, the wine speaks to us of Jesus' blood, accepted by God, and so we too are accepted and blessed by God.

Leviticus 19:5 When you offer a sacrifice of peace offerings to the LORD, you shall offer it so that you may be accepted. ESV

Application: Understand that the Lord's supper pictures not just a sacrifice, but a sacrifice and an offering, body and blood, hence bread and wine.

Q. So when Jesus said "do this in remembrance of me", what should we remember?

A. His body and his blood: His sacrificial death and his sin offering to God: 2 parts. Bipartite.

³ *The King and His Kingdom* p484.; John D. Legg, 2004, EP Books.

3. THE BREAD

Matthew 26:26 ... Jesus took bread, and after blessing it broke it and gave it to the disciples, and said, "Take, eat; this is my body." ESV

The bread represents Jesus' body. Eating the bread makes it personal.

Eating is a way of saying, "Lord Jesus: I personally trust in your death".

Song: *My Jesus, My Saviour, Lord, there is none like you* ⁴

The bread thus helps us to trust Jesus, to believe the gospel, and is thus a blessing to you through faith.

Our faith which is weak feeds on the symbol of the bread and becomes strong as we remember him.

Q. What should I be doing as I eat the bread? **A.** Rely afresh on Jesus' death for me.

1 Corinthians 11:28 Let a person examine himself, then, and so eat ... and drink ESV

Q. Why does Paul tell us to *examine* ourselves?

A. Because if we eat imagining ourselves to be anything but sinners, we are deluded!

To eat worthily means to eat as sinners for whom Jesus died, as a sacrifice.

Savoy Declaration 1658 30/7; Westminster Confession 29 vii: 'Worthy receivers outwardly partaking of the visible elements in this sacrament, do then also inwardly by faith, really and indeed, yet not carnally and corporally [i.e. not just physically], but spiritually, receive and feed upon Christ crucified, and all benefits of his death'

Q. What should be in our minds as we eat the bread? **A.:**

Application: Say to Jesus: "I personally depend on your death for me, a sinner."

4. THE CUP/WINE

Matthew. 26:27 ... he took a cup, and when he had given thanks he gave it to them, saying, "Drink of it, all of you, ...

AV/KJV '*Drink ye all of it*' - Misunderstood by a girl who thought it meant she had to drain every last drop or she would be in trouble! Well, at least she was taking it seriously!

Again, the drinking of the wine makes it personal (*all of you*).

But instead of only us speaking to God, Jesus is speaking to us, saying, "Your sin is forgiven".

Matthew 26:28 This is my blood of the covenant, which is poured out for many for the forgiveness of sins. ESV

The essential idea of a covenant is that of a promise, here the promise of *forgiveness*.

Q. With the cup, what does Jesus promise us? **A.** The *forgiveness* of all our *sin(s)*.

So, if we come to church wondering "how can God ever accept a sinner like me?" (failure to love God and neighbour, sins of thought, etc. etc. ...), after the Lord's Supper, we should leave assured of sins forgiven and our acceptance by God.

Q. What should be in our minds as we drink the wine? **A.:**

Application: Believe Jesus' covenant promise in Matthew 26:28; hear him saying to you, "As promised, all your sins are forgiven."

⁴ Darlene Zschech

5. MISTAKES TO AVOID

#1 Eating carelessly, thoughtlessly, not examining ourselves, or examining other people instead of ourselves!

#2 Depending on the Lord's supper, not the Lord. We must trust Jesus, not any sacrament. We must trust in the real thing, not in the mere symbol or picture.

Hebrews 10:21-22 ... since we have a great priest over the house of God, ²² let us draw near to God with a sincere heart and with the full assurance that faith brings, ... ESV

#3 Roman Catholicism: You have to go to the priest to get forgiveness ('absolution') instead of to Jesus, but we have a *great priest*: Jesus.

Application: Don't let anybody put anything or anyone between you and Jesus, our *priest*.

The Lord's supper should bring us closer to Jesus, never put something between us and him.

6. CONCLUSION

We have seen that:

1. The Lord's supper is a dangerous place to be. Join in carefully, with understanding.
2. The bread and the wine are to be considered separately.
3. The bread is about us sinners together feeding personally by faith on Christ in his death.
4. The wine is about Jesus promising us personally forgiveness through his blood.
5. By depending on the real thing, Jesus alone, we can have *full assurance* (Heb. 10:22).

How difficult life is for Christians in the Philippines. In addition to everything else, they have terrible floods. A woman took clothes up to the 2nd floor of a building to save them from the water. But the floods were 20' deep, so she lost the clothes, and just had to cling onto a nearby tree to be saved!

Application: We too have a tree that we must cling to. The Bible sometimes calls the cross a tree (1 Peter 2:24).



Q. What is the Lord's supper for? **A.** It is to remind us to keep clinging to the tree.

The bread and the wine in this bipartite sacrament, are 2-directional, 2-way:

In the bread we trust in Christ's death; in the wine he speaks to us of acceptance and forgiveness and all the blessings of the new covenant.

Sample two part prayer for use during communion:

The Bread:	"Lord Jesus, thank you for going to the cross for us, your people. I personally depend on your death for me, a sinner."	
The Cup:	"Thank you for your promise of complete forgiveness. Assure me now of sins forgiven, and empower me to live my life for you."	