

Lord's Day 28  
28 March 2010

Beloved brethren in our Lord, our Lord instituted only two sacraments, namely baptism and the Lord's Supper. The sacrament of Baptism signifies the incorporation into Christ those who are the elect of God. And therefore, a believer is only baptised once in his entire life. And the sacrament of the Lord's Supper emphasizes the nourishment and support for those who has already been regenerated and incorporated into the family of God, which is his church, and therefore the believer repeatedly celebrates the Lord's Supper in his life. And so you immediately see that both sacraments are one and are inseparable. He that is baptised is obliged to partake at the table of communion, as soon as he is able to discern the Lord's body.

The Lord's Supper is to be received by those who are true believers of our Lord Jesus Christ and received by faith. Today, we receive the instruction of the sacrament of the Lord's Supper.

The theme is: THE SACRAMENT OF THE LORD'S SUPPER. First, the institution of the Lord's Supper. Secondly, the symbolism of the Lord's Supper. And thirdly, the partaking of the Lord's Supper.

First, the institution of the Lord's Supper. Our Lord Jesus Christ instituted the Lord's Supper on the occasion of the last Passover. And the significance of the Lord's Supper was, in the first place, it was a harvest feast and it was celebrated in the promised land. On the 16<sup>th</sup> day of Nisan, the first sheaf of the harvest was waved before the Lord. We read in Leviticus 23.9-11, 9 "And the LORD spake unto Moses, saying, Speak unto the children of Israel, and say unto them, When ye be come into the land which I give unto you, and shall reap the harvest thereof, then ye shall bring a sheaf of the firstfruits of your harvest unto the priest: And he shall wave the sheaf before the LORD, to be accepted for you: on the morrow after the sabbath the priest shall wave it". Secondly, it is above all, a feast of commemoration, remembering the Lord had passed over the dwelling of His people that were covered by the blood of the lamb in the night the Destroyer went through the house of bondage to kill all the firstborn of the land. And on the passover the people commemorated the great deliverance from the house of bondage by the might of the hand of God (Ex. 12.3). And finally, it was a feast with typical significance. Israel celebrated the deliverance that was accomplished and at the same time, they looked forward to its deliverance as it was to be realised in the blood of the lamb that was slain.

It was the passover that Jesus Christ changed into the New Testament sacrament of the Lord's Supper. For that purpose, he did not take the lamb but bread and wine. The lamb could not serve the purpose of the signs in the Lord's Supper. The lamb was the very last lamb that could be eaten and that could ever be sacrificed. The lamb was eaten by Christ and the apostles, had been carried into the temple and sacrificed there before it was carried into the upper room. That lamb of the passover which Christ so greatly desire to eat with the disciples. In that passover, the Lamb of God stood ready to be

sacrificed. It was typical of the sacrifice that was to be accomplished on the cross. What did the Lord use as elements? The Lord took bread, which was eaten at the passover and the wine that was drunk. So the bread and wine, instead of the lamb, Christ definitely instituted.

The bread and wine were so instituted as a sacrament and therefore, as signs and seals are clear from the words spoken by the Lord at the institution. The bread and wine were separated or set apart from all other bread and wine.

We read in Matthew 26.26, 27,

“And as they were eating, Jesus took bread, and blessed *it*, and brake *it*, and gave *it* to the disciples, and said, Take, eat; this is my body. And he took the cup, and gave thanks, and gave *it* to them, saying, Drink ye all of it”.

Furthermore, the Lord instituted the Lord’s Supper very definitely that it might be observed by the church. This is the clear command of Christ in Luke 22.19, “This do in remembrance of me”. From this it is clear that the Lord instituted a sacrament which was to be observed throughout the ages by His church in the world. And the importance of the Lord’s Supper is also seen that this institution of it was repeated by special revelation to the apostle Paul, who tells us in I Cor. 11.23 to 26. It is clear that when the apostle writes that he had received it by special revelation and not from the rest of the apostles. And the fact the Lord gave this special revelation to the apostle when he was not personally present when our Lord was on earth. And therefore, the church ought to guard jealously this feast of commemoration. What is the symbolism of the Lord’s Supper?

The first symbolism is the bread and wine. By these elements of bread and wine, the Catechism in Question and Answer 75 teaches us that, he feeds and nourishes my soul to everlasting life, with his crucified body and shed blood, as I receive from the hand of the minister and taste with my mouth the bread and cup of the Lord. And in Question and answer 76, it further explains that to eat the crucified body and drink of the shed blood is to become more and more united to his sacred body, by the holy ghost, who dwells both in Christ and in us so that we are flesh of his flesh, and bone of his bone. Therefore, the bread signifies Christ as the bread of life. Jesus says to the Jews in John 6.35, “I am the bread of life: he that cometh to me shall never hunger; and he that believeth on me shall never thirst”. And concerning the symbolism of wine, firstly, wine is the colour of blood and that at the communion table is the symbol of the blood of Christ. Secondly, wine is the symbol of the communion, of prosperity and joy. This we read in Genesis 14.18-20, “18 And Melchizedek king of Salem brought forth bread and wine: and he was the priest of the most high God. 19 And he blessed him, and said, Blessed be Abram of the most high God, possessor of heaven and earth: 20 And blessed be the most high God, which hath delivered thine enemies into thy hand. And he gave him tithes of all”. Melchizedek brought bread and wine as symbols of rejoicing of deliverance from the enemies. When Abraham had heard that his nephew Lot was captured, he took his armed servants, three hundred and eighteen of them and pursued after the enemies. And after the night assault, he fought against the enemies, brought back all the goods and Lot and the people. Of the blessing which Isaac bestowed upon Jacob, we read in Genesis 28.27, 28, “And he came near, and kissed him: and he

smelled the smell of his raiment, and blessed him, and said, See, the smell of my son *is* as the smell of a field which the LORD hath blessed: 28 Therefore God give thee of the dew of heaven, and the fatness of the earth, and plenty of corn and wine: Of the blessing which had been bestowed upon Jacob, we read". Wine is also the symbol of the covenant blessings of Jehovah upon his people. Israel in the land of Canaan. We read in Deut. 7.13, "And he will love thee, and bless thee, and multiply thee: he will also bless the fruit of thy womb, and the fruit of thy land, thy corn, and thy wine, and thine oil, the increase of thy kine, and the flocks of thy sheep, in the land which he swore unto thy fathers to give thee". And Psalm 104;14, 15, "He causeth the grass to grow for the cattle, and herb for the service of man: that he may bring forth food out of the earth; 15 And wine *that* maketh glad the heart of man, *and* oil to make *his* face to shine, and bread *which* strengtheneth man's heart". Wine is the symbol of heavenly joy, and therefore it was fitting that at the wedding at Cana the heavenly Bridegroom should change the water into wine, and so we can understand that wine is the proper and sign of the blood of the lamb, by which our sins is covered by the righteousness of Christ and our earthly life is transformed into the joy of God's heavenly tabernacle.

The second symbol is the broken bread and poured out wine. The bread at the table must be broken, as we read in Matthew 26.26. How was the body of Christ broken? It has been objected that the body of Christ was not broken. They point to John 19.33, 35, 36. Verse 36 refers to the passage about the passover lamb in Exodus 12.46. "In one house shall it be eaten; thou shalt not carry forth ought of the flesh abroad out of the house; neither shall ye break a bone thereof". And again in Numbers 9.12, "12 They shall leave none of it unto the morning, nor break any bone of it: according to all the ordinances of the passover they shall keep it". But, although in this sense the body of Christ was never broken and was laid whole in the sepulchre of Joseph of Arimathea, yet in a very real sense, the body of Christ was broken as the Lord emphasizes in the institution of the Lord's Supper, saying, "This is my body which is broken for you". His body was broken by the nails that were hammered through his hands and through his feet, as well as the spear that was thrust by the soldier that resulted in the flowing forth of blood and water from his side. It was also broken in such a way that Jesus might for six hours slowly pour out his life-blood, taste death in all its fullness and suffer the wrath of God for the sins of his own. Therefore, it is proper to preserve this symbolism by breaking the bread before the eyes of the congregation in the hands of the minister. The same can be said of the pouring of the wine, although this aspect is not emphasized in the Scripture. We read this in Matthew 26.26, Mark 14.13, 14. Just as the broken bread is the symbol of the broken body of Christ, so the poured out wine is the symbol of the shed blood of Christ. Again this part of the rich symbolism must be preserved in the congregation.

The third sign is the eating the bread and drinking the wine at the table of communion. At the institution of the Lord's Supper, the Saviour commanded very definitely, "take, eat: this is my body, " and against when he had taken the cup, he said, "drink ye all of it; for this is my blood of the new testament which is shed for many for the remission of sins" The symbolism of the Lord's

Supper is not simply to be looked at, but to be appropriated by eating and drinking. And this eating and drinking is the sign of the spiritual activity of faith, so that we appropriate Christ and all his benefits as our Lord said to the Jews in Capernaum in John 6.53-55, 56 Then Jesus said unto them, Verily, verily, I say unto you, Except ye eat the flesh of the Son of man, and drink his blood, ye have no life in you. 54 Whoso eateth my flesh, and drinketh my blood, hath eternal life; and I will raise him up at the last day. 55 For my flesh is meat indeed, and my blood is drink indeed. 56 He that eateth my flesh, and drinketh my blood, dwelleth in me, and I in him". This eating and drink is the activity of saving faith, where we believe in Jesus Christ and we inherit eternal life.

The fourth symbol is the sign of the word of the minister, through whom Christ by His Spirit addresses his own word to the hearts of the communing believers. The words are, "Take, eat: this is my body and "this is my blood of the New Testament, which is shed for many" and "do this in remembrance of me". These words are to be understood as a command and must be obeyed, and not to partake of the table of the Lord is disobedience to the command of Christ to do this in remembrance of him. But, more important is the truth that the Word of Christ is powerful and efficacious. And this word will he surely speak through the Holy Spirit to the hearts of the believers when they celebrate the Supper of the Lord. Through the officiating minister, it is Christ that speaks his own word to the believers. Without the presence of Christ at the table, there is no sacrament, and therefore the Lord's Supper cannot be a means of grace for the strengthening of our faith. And so, the word of Christ is an essential part of the communion.

The last symbol is the table of communion. It is a supper, which is a sign of the fellowship of friendship. This table of communion is the table of God's everlasting covenant. And the Lord addresses the church in Laodicea, "behold, I stand at the door and knock; if any man hear my voice, and open the door, I will come unto him, and sup with him, and he with me". At the table of communion, believers eat and drink with Christ and through Christ with their covenant God, who dwells with them and walks among them and calls them his sons and daughters. This covenant is also a marriage. And we can say that the Lord's Supper is the wedding ring which Christ puts upon the finger of his bride, the Church, which is a sure pledge of love. The church, the bride of Christ is still on earth and waits for the heavenly wedding. And on earth, she despairs because by nature she is unfaithful. According to the old man of sin, she is an adulteress and therefore, she cries out, "O wretch man that I am! Who shall deliver me from the body of this death!" And in that state she needs comfort. And that comfort is in the Word of God. But as an added comfort and assurance, the Bridegroom puts the wedding ring on her finger, and looking at that wedding ring, the bride may hear the voice of her bridegroom saying, "as often as ye eat of this bread and drink of this cup, you shall be assured of my hearty love and my faithfulness towards you. As you will suffer eternal death, I have given my body to the death of the cross and have shed my blood for you. I will certainly feed and nourish your hungry and thirsty soul into everlasting life as you eat the bread and drink the wine in remembrance of me. And so the table of communion is a sign of the

tabernacle of God with man, as it will be realised finally in the new heaven and the new earth.

And finally, we come to the meaning of the eating of the crucified body and drinking of the shed blood of Christ. In order to receive the blessings of salvation, namely, the forgiveness of sins and life eternal, we must be united with His sacred body. Let me illustrate with water that is piped into our homes. In order to receive water, our water taps are linked to the water tank and the water tank to the water reservoirs. Another illustration: the electric current that brings light into our home is generated in a central power station in the place that you live and the gas you use to cook your food come from some storage tanks in the home or from central location. This means that from one reservoir all the homes of our city are supplied with drinking water and from one power plant we receive all the electricity that brightens our home. And therefore, we can say that Christ is the spiritual power plan from which the current of life flows into your soul. Christ is the one and only storage tank in the entire kingdom of God, the sole reservoir, out of whom flows continually the water of life to quench the thirst of all the citizens of that kingdom. Therefore, it is obvious, that in order to receive all these blessings of salvation from Christ; we must be spiritually united with Him. How then is this union established? It is not established by us but absolutely and unconditionally by God in Christ Jesus our Lord through faith. Through faith, Christ indeed feeds and nourishes our souls unto everlasting life. This is active faith and not passive. Not passive like when a man in hospital who is incapable of taking nourishment by eating and drinking so that food is injected into his veins through needles. As in this case, that man is nourished without any action on his part – he does not eat and drink, he does not even taste the food for he is wholly passive. But this is not the way in which Christ nourishes us through faith. Instead, Christ nourishes us through active faith, so that the sinner draws all the blessings of salvation out of Christ eat his flesh and drinks his blood. Faith is that wonderful spiritual power whereby the soul strikes its roots into Christ to cling unto him, appropriate him and draws out of him all the glorious blessings of salvation that are in him – the forgiveness of sins and righteousness and life.

The believer is led to Christ through the preaching of God's Word. He will take hold of Christ, cling to him and draw from him all the spiritual nourishment that are necessary unto eternal life. By faith, the believer is rooted in him. And since Christ is revealed to us in the Scriptures, true faith always turns to them, has its delight in the Word of God, is called into activity through the Word preached and constantly grows according in the knowledge and understanding of his Word. By faith, he knows the Lord as the righteousness of his own righteousness and as the bread of life for which he hungers. He recognises him as his own saviour and redeemer, longs for him, eat and drinks him unto righteousness and life. These then are the two aspects of that wonder of grace so that we become more and more united to the sacred body of Christ and become flesh of his flesh, bone of his bone. First, Christ imparts himself to us by the Spirit of grace. Secondly, by the activity of saving faith we eat and drink unto life eternal. And by this wonder of grace is the significance of the Lord's Supper. On the one hand, it signifies and seals that Christ feeds

and nourishes my soul to everlasting life, with his crucified body and blood. As I receive from the hands of the minister, and taste with my mouth the bread and wine of the Lord, as the certain signs of the body and blood of the Lord. And on the other hand, it signifies that we eat and drink the crucified body and the shed blood of Christ, so that we become more and more united to his sacred body, And thus, it stimulates our faith, so that we draw all our salvation out of Christ, who died for us and rose again. Amen.