

Biblical Topics

Sacrament of the Altar – Lord’s Supper – IS

What is the Sacrament of the Altar?

It is the true body and blood of our Lord Jesus Christ under the bread and wine, instituted by Christ Himself for us Christians to eat and drink.

Where is this written?

The holy Evangelists Matthew, Mark, Luke, and St. Paul write: Our Lord Jesus Christ, on the night when He was brayed, took bread, and when He had given thanks, He broke it and gave it to the disciples and said: “Take and eat; this is My body, which is given for you. “This do in remembrance of Me.” In the way also He took the cup after supper, and when He had given thanks, He gave it to them, saying: “Drink of it, all of you; this cup is the new testament in My blood, which is shed for you for the forgiveness of sins. This do, as often as you drink it, in remembrance of Me.”

The Sacrament of the Altar is known also as the Lord’s Supper, the Lord’s Table, Holy Communion, the Breaking of Bread, and the Eucharist.

This Sacrament was instituted during the feast of the unleavened bread (Luke 22:7). Jesus used unleavened bread because it was what was used for this feast . We use unleavened bread in the form of wafers which are convenient for distribution. In the cup we learn that it was “the fruit of the vine” (Luke 22:18). From history we know that wine was used at the Passover at the Lord’s Supper in the early church (1 Corinthians 11:21). We, therefore, use wine because we have no reason, nor authority to substitute anything else.

The prepositions “in, with, and under” do not indicate a special place where the body and blood can be located. It simply means that together with the bread and wine we receive the body and blood. We are not expected to comprehend it, but we are to believe that Christ by His almighty power joins His body and blood to the bread and wine in the Sacrament.

- 1 Corinthians 10:16: Is not the cup of thanksgiving for which we give thanks a participation in the blood of Christ? And is not the bread that we break a participation in the body of Christ?

There is nothing in the Bible which shows that we should be baptized repeatedly. But the words “as often” clearly show that Christ wants us to partake of His Supper frequently. We should receive the Lord’s Supper frequently because:

- A. Christ commands, and urgently invites us, saying, “This do in remembrance of Me;”
- B. Christ promises to give us His blessings, “Given and shed for you for the remission of sins;”
- C. We need the forgiveness of sins and the strength to resist the devil, the world, and our sinful nature.

- 1 Corinthians 11:25-26: ²⁵ In the same way, after supper he took the cup, saying, “This cup is the new covenant in my blood; do this, whenever you drink it, in remembrance of me.” ²⁶ For whenever you eat this bread and drink this cup, you proclaim the Lord’s death until he comes.
- Acts 2:42: They devoted themselves to the apostles’ teaching and to the fellowship, to the breaking of bread and to prayer.
- Matthew 11:28: “Come to me, all you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest.

Much of the above information is taken from: “Luther’s Small Catechism” annotated by Edward W. A. Koehler.