

# *Alêtheia Christian Fellowship*

*March 21, 2021*

*“Holy Communion”*

*Sunday school at 8:30, Service at 9:15, Service at 10:45 with King’s Kids.*

***NEWS***

Wednesday Night Activities at 6:30 PM

330 N. Somers Rd. (Mail: PO Box 10626) Kalispell, MT 59904~ (406) 755-1776

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## **MATTHEW 26:26-29 ~**

A Passover meal that is summarized in Exodus 12 and Deuteronomy 16. While it was part obedience to \_\_\_\_\_, part eating a communal \_\_\_\_\_, part annual \_\_\_\_\_, and part friendly \_\_\_\_\_, more than that, it was an \_\_\_\_\_ remembrance and a \_\_\_\_\_ identification.

For the Jews, Passover is personal. God rescued their ancestors with the \_\_\_\_\_ plague. At “About midnight,” He went through to “Strike down all the firstborn in the land of Egypt.” Death came from the Angel of Death, derived from the Hebrew מַשְׁחָת (màsh-ǵāt), translated the “Destroyer.

God already knew, but the people had to obey Him, and in so doing, “Personally identify” with Him and with what He was doing by the sign of blood (Exodus 11:7).

A Jewish person might have thought, “I’m not sure I can agree with this method of deliverance.”

*Fill out the other side, detach this part of the page, and place it in the offering plate or the prayer/suggestion box in the lobby or with an Elder or Deacon of the church.*

*God Bless You!*

The Hebrew word פֶּסַח (pě-sàḵ), is usually translated as “Passover.” The closest Greek imitation is πάσχα (päs-ḡä), giving us Paschal for \_\_\_\_\_.

Jesus once again did something unexpected. He took some bread, gave another \_\_\_\_\_ (the Jewish prayer of blessing for bread is called הַמּוֹדֵה (hä-mō-tzē).

Jesus equated the bread with His body. In what way is it His body?

Jesus then took a ποτήριον (pö-tā-rē-ōn), a drinking cup. He gave thanks (a different Greek word εὐχαριστέω (ü-ḡä-rēs-tē-ō), meaning to \_\_\_\_\_ . It shows that it was the blessing for wine called הַגְּבִנָּה (hà-gä-fën).

He claimed two related concepts associated with the cup. First, the inauguration of a New Covenant and second, the enablement of the forgiveness of sins once and for all. His blood is “Poured out,” means His violent \_\_\_\_\_.

Catholic:

Luther:

Calvin:

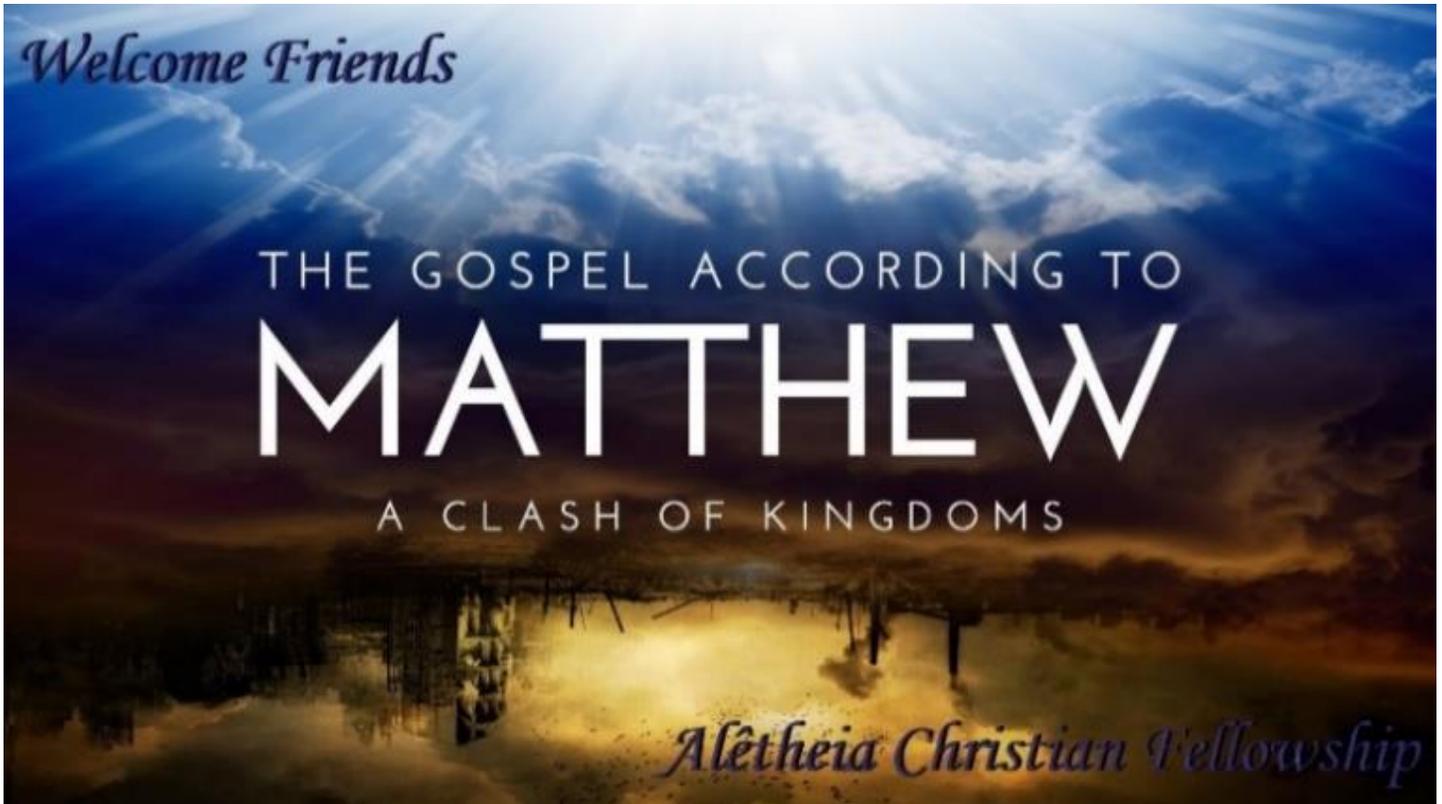
Zwingli:

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Write a brief note – detach and place in the offering, or the prayer box, or give it to a Deacon or Elder.

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Name \_\_\_\_\_ Address \_\_\_\_\_

Phone \_\_\_\_\_ Email \_\_\_\_\_



Matthew 26:26-29 ~ 26While they were eating, Jesus took some bread, and after a blessing, He broke it and gave it to the disciples, and said, “Take, eat; this is My body.” 27And when He had taken a cup and given thanks, He gave it to them, saying, “Drink from it, all of you; 28for this is My blood of the covenant, which is poured out for many for forgiveness of sins. 29“But I say to you, I will not drink of this fruit of the vine from now on until that day when I drink it new with you in My Father’s kingdom.”



As I said last week, this was a traditional, scripturally mandated by God, Jewish Passover meal. The requirements for keeping it are recorded in a few places in the Bible, but summarized in Exodus chapter 12 and Deuteronomy chapter 16. That was then elaborated on by the Rabbis before, during, and after, Jesus' earthly life, in what was initially an oral, and then later, a written, body of biblical interpretation called the Talmud.

While it was part obedience to God in His Biblical mandate, and part eating a communal meal, and part annual celebration, and part friendly fellowship, more than that, it was an instructed remembrance and a

personal identification. Keep those two concepts in mind... An instructed remembrance and a personal identification.

I said, “Scripturally mandated by God,” because God specifically commanded, through Moses, in Numbers 9:13, that if anyone was able to celebrate Passover and didn’t, they were to be “Cut off” from Israel. Cut out of the Covenant. It is the same as being condemned to the Lake of Fire as an unbeliever. To be disconnected from Israel, was to be disconnected from God and His salvation.

That points to the “Personal identification” part I spoke about. To be a child of the Covenant, one had to be part of Israel. That not only meant being born a Jew, but also “Personally identifying” as a Jew. Participation in Passover was about accepting what being a Jew meant and embracing that identity as a member of the community and so then as a partaker in the Covenant. To fully participate in Passover was to fully accept what it meant, which was to fully identify, as a child of Israel covered under the Covenant of salvation.

That brings us to the “Instructed remembrance” part. The entire point was to remember what God had done

for them as a people. It is a racial memory of identifying with the original ancestors who were saved from bondage. Their forbears were delivered by God from Egyptian slavery, degradation, persecution, and death. They were rescued, or saved from the fate they had earned, by God's unmerited and unilateral Grace.

Those of us without any significant amount of Jewish ancestry can still remember what God did for Israel. As Christians we can be moved by that remembrance even more by identifying as those "Grafted in," but it can never be the same as it is for those who are connected by blood. The 9/11 attack is seared into the memory of those of us who lived through it, but far less than for those who were at ground zero that day, or who lost loved ones in the Towers.

For Jews, this is personal. Just like the Holocaust can be shared by Gentiles as a repugnant bit of history and a cautionary tale, it can never be anything like it is for Jewish people. As I said, for the Jews, Passover is very personal. God rescued their ancestors from brutal captivity and delivered them to the Promised Land. He did it by way of the Tenth Plague.



That final plague was that God, at “About midnight,” went through to “Strike down all the firstborn in the land of Egypt.” The death came at the hands of the Angel of Death, derived from the Hebrew מַשְׁחָט (màsh-ḵāt), translated the “Destroyer.” In one sense, the Egyptians are the cause of their own fate, in another sense it is clearly God Himself executing judgment, but the actual instrument is usually thought of as an angel called the “Destroyer.”

We should never shy away from this fundamental reality. People bring judgment upon themselves and while it may be an angel who executes God’s righteous

justice, it is God who is unabashedly and unashamedly giving such people what they have earned.

God will send multitudes of human beings into the Lake of Fire. Only a fool would believe in Biblical Grace and disbelieve in Biblical Justice. If the same Book declares both, but one is false, only a deluded humanist would still believe the other.

For modern Christians to deny God's righteous Judgment, or to even to downplay it, is to advance a false picture of God and to diminish the salvation from such a fate that He unilaterally and sacrificially provided in Christ Jesus our Lord and God.

He told the Jews that as He came through that night everyone would know that He made a "Distinction between Egypt and Israel" (Exodus 11:7). God can tell the difference between them. He did not need an assist to help Him out. He already knew with precision who was going to die and who was going to be spared and why. Yet, He ordered them to sacrifice lambs, paint their doorposts and lintels with that innocent blood and then stay inside their homes together that night eating the roasted lamb in a communal meal.

God already knew what He was going to do, but the people He intended to spare had to demonstrate that they were part of His covenantal community... They had to obey Him and in so doing “Personally identify” with Him and what He was doing.

A Jewish person might have thought, while I appreciate You wanting to Save us God, I’m not so hip on your methods. I thought turning the water to blood was a bit extreme, the frogs, flies and locusts were miserable, Darkness for three days was a huge inconvenience, but this killing off of the firstborn... I don’t know, I’m not sure I can get onboard with that one.

You either accept Salvation the way God chooses to provide it, or you will exclude yourself from His Salvation. To accept the Salvation God provides, in the way He provides it, is to accept Him and His Savior just as they are. Not as you wish, but as they are and it makes sense, because that is the starting point for any truly healthy relationship of any kind.

God also told the Jews to pack their bags, put on their travelling clothes, and to make bread without spending the time to let it rise before baking. Hence unleavened bread. They were leaving.

Wine was a given, as were vegetables and sauces to flavor them. The final ingredient was bitter herbs to remind the Jews of what they were leaving behind. It was a horrible existence and yet, it was what they knew. That generation was so psychologically abused by centuries of slavery they couldn't embrace their new freedom and the personal responsibility that must come with it. The bitter herbs help their descendants to remember that part.



Three more quick things... First, God commanded that the lamb be an unblemished male. Second, none of the lamb could remain afterwards... No leftovers. The

sacrifice had to be completely gone by morning. Third, through the whole process, none of the lamb's bones could be broken. Let's move on...

In the 1st century, each family group or party of friends celebrating the Passover together were required to find an indoor place in Jerusalem and rid the place of any yeast, then they had to have a lamb properly sacrificed by a priest at the Temple, take the meat, and prepare a meal for that night together with unleavened or, flat bread. Bitter herbs, of course, with a fair amount of wine and other kosher dishes.

The Hebrew word  $\text{פֶּסַח}$  (pě-sàx), is usually translated as "Passover." Death passed over. It really has a more accurate meaning of sparing. It was associated with the sacrificial system, here is the innocent blood paid to spare the participants from the righteous justice they deserve. It means immunity from the penalty and so God gave immunity to those who had trusted in Him and His Salvation proven by their obedience to His method of reconciliation.

It demonstrates that a person recognizes that they are not living up to their side of right relationship with God. Further, that they can't live up to their side and so that

they accept His method of correcting that discrepancy. The Sacrificed lamb came to be known as the  $\eta\lambda\lambda\acute{\alpha}\varsigma$  lamb, and then simply as the  $\eta\lambda\lambda\acute{\alpha}$ . The closest Greek can come to that is  $\pi\acute{\alpha}\sigma\chi\alpha$  (päs- $\acute{\alpha}$ ). We get the theological term Paschal from it, meaning things having to do with Easter.

The Passover meal was interspersed with preprogramed ritual questions, explanations, instructions, Scripture quotations and the like. The entire point was to remember what God had done for one's ancestors and so identify with that lineage and Covenant with great praise and worship for the One and Only Savior God.

This is what Jesus was doing in the Upper Room with His guys. He had started the formal meal portion with a Blessing and then symbolically broken the bread as a green light to commence eating.

It was all going according to plan until Jesus interrupted the flow with His shocking statement that one of their very own in that room was going to betray Him to brutal execution by the Roman government.

Judas may not have thought it would go that far, or he may have thought that it would force Jesus' hand as the Messiah, but Jesus had clearly and repeatedly told all of them that His betrayal would result in horrific crucifixion.



After getting through that revelation and ensuing confusion, Jesus once again did something unexpected. He took some bread, gave another blessing, broke it, and gave it out to His disciples.

That was another startling departure from the script. He had their attention. What was this? Jesus was, by this action, instituting a whole new thing. The Passover was

essentially ended and something related, but not the same, was inaugurated.

Jesus equated the bread with His body and indicated that eating His body in that manner, in that setting, was required. Any of them who would have refused would have excluded themselves from Him. It is a double command, "Take, eat," both imperative verbs ordering the action. If Jesus is your Lord, then without hesitation you will take and you will eat thus proving that He is your Lord and that you identify with Him as His disciple.

That you abandon the Old Covenant, for the New one in Him - you cannot keep both! To try to keep both, negates both... Choose one or the other. The Old, which is perfect adherence to the Law, or the New which is perfect reliance upon Jesus.

It was His body. In what way is it His body? Let's keep that thought in the back of our mind and talk about it together with the wine. For now, the basic concept is that the bread was, at a minimum, representative of His physical body that would be brutalized as the ultimate, perfect Passover Lamb. He gave thanks for that.

What does that mean? The Jewish prayer of blessing for bread is called  $\text{חַמּוֹצֵי}$  (hä-mō-tzē), hamotzi, it goes like this... “Blessed are You, Adonai our God, ruler of the universe, who brings forth bread ( $\text{חַמּוֹצֵי}$ ) from the earth.” It is not a blessing of the bread itself, nor of the people about to eat the bread... It is a blessing of God, the provider of the bread... Jesus was blessing the Father for sending Him to His death.

Why would anyone do that? In a word, trust. For Jesus it was more than that, as alluded to in Luke’s account where he recorded Jesus’ words, “I have earnestly desired to eat this Passover with you before I suffer; 16for I say to you, I shall never again eat it until it is fulfilled in the kingdom of God.”

Jesus knew His suffering would inaugurate the Kingdom of God - the provision of true Salvation for mankind and He blessed the Father for it.

How do we modern Americans usually pray? In a blessing before a meal, instead of we bless you Holy Father for the provision of bread, we make it about everything else... “Lord bless this food and the hands that prepared it so that it will nourish and strengthen me.” As an example. In our personal prayers, instead of praying the way Jesus taught, blessing the Father,

praying for His glory and His Kingdom and His Will. We usually start off with a long litany of apologies and a request for purification before we go into a list of what our will is... “Lord, please forgive my foolish misdeeds, I’m sorry and I ask that you cleanse and sanctify me. Help me do better next time. Please be with me today as I blah, blah, blah.” Even in our Communion celebrations we frequently hear in the prayer of blessing, “Lord let this bread and wine bind us to you, let it transform us, let it give us the spiritual nourishment we need to get through the week.”

Jesus prayed, “Blessed are You, Holy Father God for bringing forth the Bread of Life from Heaven.” I know people get tired of me constantly reminding us that we are self-absorbed, but it isn’t like it we don’t need to be reminded.



Jesus then took a ποτήριον (pō-tā-řē-ōn), a vessel for drinking. We get our word pōtable, not pōtable, meaning drinkable, from the root. It was a cup that was most assuredly nothing special in itself. As Indiana said, “Now, this is the cup of a carpenter.”

Jesus gave thanks. It is a different Greek word than the “Blessing,” for the bread. It’s to show that it wasn’t the same prayer even though the principle was the same. Jews say a different blessing over wine. The gist is the same, but it is a separate prayer called הַגָּפֶן (hà-gä-fën), Hagafen. “Blessed are you Adonai our God, Ruler of the universe who creates the fruit of the vine.”

The Greek word for the Blessing of God here, is the verb εὐχαριστέω (ü-ĥä-řēs-tě-ō), meaning to give thanks. This is where we get our theological term Eucharist. Jesus gave them the wine and again commanded them to drink. With the bread, and now the wine, Jesus ordered them to partake, and then told them what it was all about. There is a sense that the Lord wants us to trust and do before we get the explanation of why.

He claimed two related concepts associated with the wine. First, as His blood it would inaugurate a new covenant and second, it would do so as the enablement of forgiveness of sins once and for all. Animal sacrifices worked to a degree; this was a whole new reality.

In English, we kind of miss a nuance with the wine as it is equated to Jesus' blood. His blood is "Poured out," or "Shed." The Greek term means to "Spill" and every time it is used of blood in the Bible, it indicates a violent death. Jesus wasn't saying that He was going to pour out His blood, He was saying that His blood would be spilled in violent execution as a sacrifice for the forgiveness of sins, and therefore, the ushering in of a New Covenant.

The New Covenant means, by definition, a replacement of the Old Covenant. According to the Bible, it is a “Better Covenant, which has been enacted on better promises” (Hebrews 8:6). When we enter into a contract, we could amend the contract as many times as we wish, if everyone involved agrees to the changes. It is the same contract, even though it may bear little resemblance to the original. Another way to go is to write a whole new contract. In that case it replaces the old one and so the old one becomes null and void.

Why so many Christians think that the New Covenant was just a way to help people better comply with the Old Covenant is beyond me. Obviously, they don’t understand how covenants work. That begs the question, how precisely do we become participants in the New Covenant? That takes us back to the question we were loosely holding; “In what way is it His body?” And now, in what way is it His blood?

I can’t do this justice in soundbites, but I’ll give you a taste... There are four basic approaches within Christianity regarding Communion. Let’s start with what everyone agrees on... This event was to be reenacted

by Christians, “In remembrance of Jesus,” Proclaiming Him until the Kingdom fully comes.

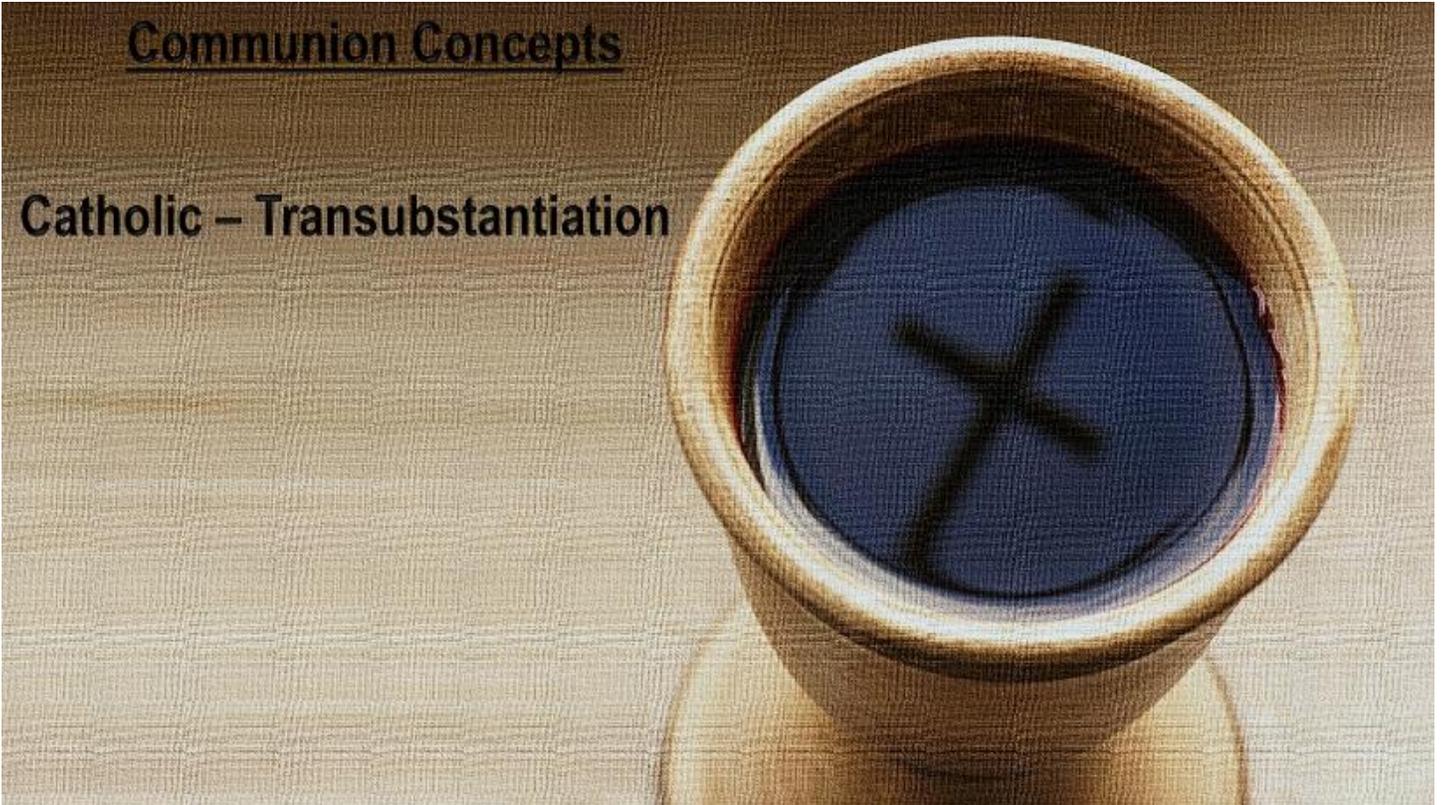
All Christians agree that Communion is a fellowship of Believers whereby we identify as Christians by participating in the Covenant Jesus established. So, there is agreement on the horizontal relationship of the church because of the vertical relationship with God.

We all agree that the elements should be some kind of bread and some kind of grape liquid. We all agree it should be done far more often than once a year. Nearly all agree that it is a church thing, rather than an individual thing, and that it is to normally take place as part of regular Christian worship on Sunday morning.

Acts 20:7, “On the first day of the week, when we were gathered together to break bread.” Church documents from the first three centuries as well as other archeological and historical evidence confirm that conclusion.

## Communion Concepts

### Catholic – Transubstantiation



Formalized in 1215 the Catholic position is called transubstantiation. Their focus is on the word “Is.” Remember after Bill Clinton was caught lying about Monica Lewinski, he defended himself by saying, “It depends on what your definition of the word is, is.”?

Jesus said, “Take, eat; this IS My body.” Then later, “This IS My blood.” Catholics point out that Jesus didn’t say this is like My body, but that it is My body. They believe that the elements of bread and wine change when an ordained priest consecrates them. They believe it is truly and fully Jesus’ flesh and His blood, even though it still appears to be bread and wine. That’s why only authorized clergy can consecrate the

elements and why once they are, the elements themselves are worshipped as now being Jesus.

The “Three Great Reformers,” Martin Luther of Germany, John Calvin of France, and Huldrych Zwingli of Switzerland were all Catholic scholars and humanists. In the early 1500’s humanism meant a return to source documents over the institutions they spawned. For a thousand years the Western, and then Catholic, church only had a Latin translation of the Bible. A Catholic Priest named Erasmus brought the original Greek to the west enabling the “Three” a fresh look at the Scriptures.

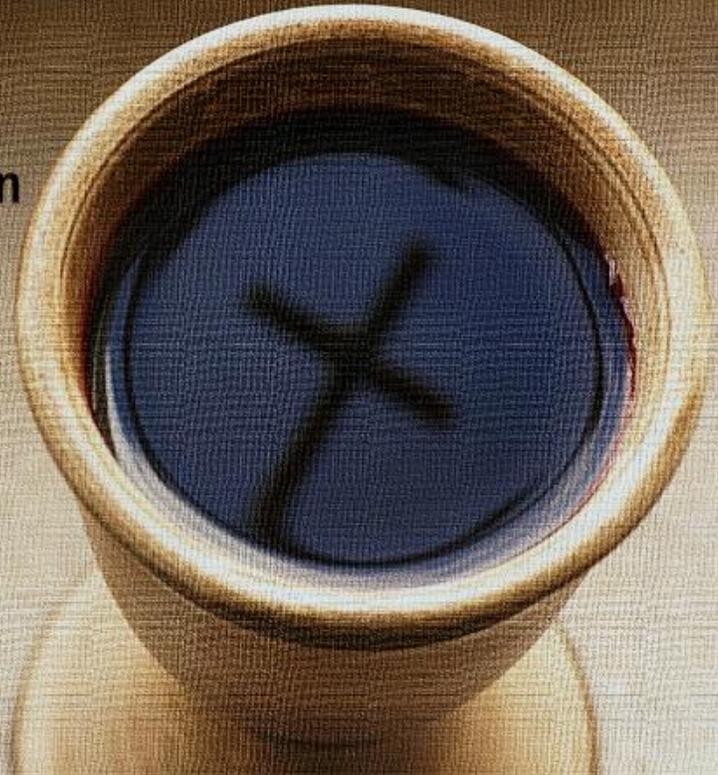
They all saw extra-biblical, non-biblical, and more importantly, anti-biblical practices in Catholicism. They protested the most grievous of the errors and sought to reform the church. Hence Protestant Reformation. The church didn’t go for it and we entered hundreds of years of burning people at the stake.

One of their biggest problems was the real physical presence of Jesus in the Communion elements. Yet, they were reluctant, as lifelong Catholics to that point, to “Throw the baby out with the bathwater.”

## Communion Concepts

**Catholic – Transubstantiation**

**Luther – Consubstantiation**



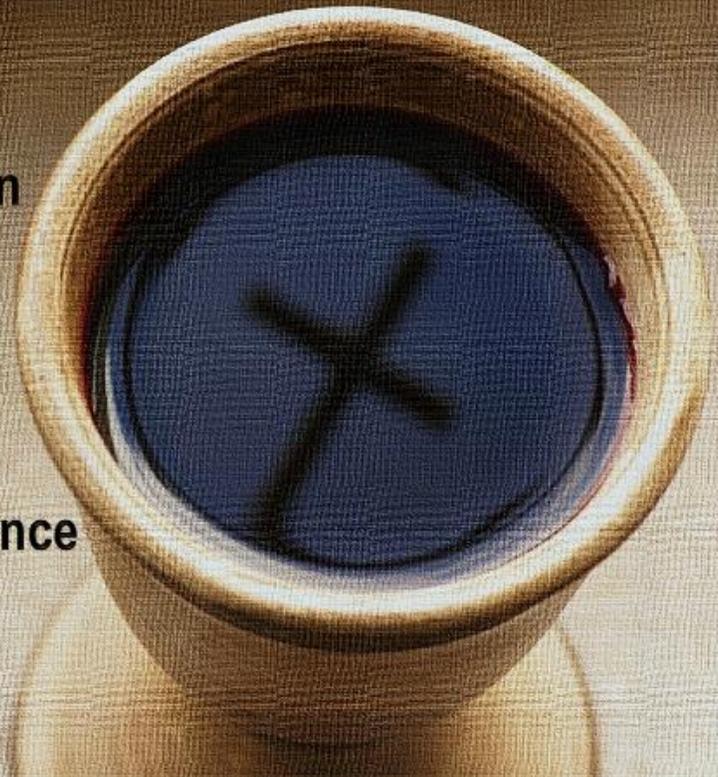
Luther developed what people disparagingly call Consubstantiation. Luther said, the elements were still bread and wine, but at the same time, became body and blood... Con, or with, as in together at the same time. It still takes an ordained minister to perform, and the elements become semi-sacred - honored, but not worshipped.

## Communion Concepts

**Catholic – Transubstantiation**

**Luther – Consubstantiation**

**Calvin – Real Spiritual Presence**



Calvin was able to get further from his Catholic roots and said that the elements did not change at all physically, but once consecrated, they were the body and blood of Jesus Spiritually. Again, we need an ordained minister to consecrate the elements in order for the real “Spiritual” presence of Jesus to invade the elements, which then become a little less sacred than the Lutheran elements and a whole lot less than the Catholic elements.

## Communion Concepts

**Catholic – Transubstantiation**

**Luther – Consubstantiation**

**Calvin – Real Spiritual Presence**

**Zwingli – Symbolic Elements**



Zwingli was probably the smartest of the three and was in my opinion the better biblical scholar. He noted several things in the text we are studying today that were missed or ignored by the others. Many are technical and I won't go into it, but one of his points is easy to recognize... At the institution of Communion Jesus was physically with them and was physically participating. It would have been impossible for the original Apostles at the first ever Holy Communion to have thought that somehow Jesus became part of the bread and wine.

For them, it would have been completely obvious that Jesus was again doing what Jesus constantly did... He was making an analogy. The broken bread

representing His crushed body and the cup representing His blood violently spilled, both actually represent His death, not His life and not Him, Himself.

That is confirmed by the Apostle Paul in I Corinthians 11:26, “For as often as you eat this bread and drink the cup, you proclaim the Lord’s death until He comes.” We proclaim the death that set us free... The death that the elements point to that ushered in the New Covenant in which we stand.

The idea is further confirmed where the Apostle records Jesus’ words also found in Luke, “Do this in remembrance of Me.” Not, do this to bring Me, physically, semi-physically, or even spiritually, into food elements and then take me into your stomach, so I can be with you for several hours or less. The Spirit of Jesus dwells inside every Christian all the time, with, or without Communion.

**No one has ever seen God; but if we love one another,  
God lives in us and his love is made complete in us.**

Finally, the Bible in dealing with the theology of Communion says that to participate in Communion “In an unworthy manner, shall be guilty of the body and the blood of the Lord.” People make a horrible mess of understanding that concept. If you take it in context, God’s point there is that Communion is all about the community, not the individual.

To take Communion in a worthy manner means that you identify with Christ in His death and in the life it enables. It is to publicly submit to His salvation and to His Lordship. It therefore should go without saying, that it is to obey His command to love one another.

To take Communion unworthily is to not fully submit to Christ and not fully love His church, His Bride, His Body. What's crazy, is all the Christians who refuse to take Communion in what they see as the wrong way, or with the wrong people, are the very people making it about them and their opinions... They are the ones who are unworthy.

The final verse today confirms that Jesus did eat and drink with His Disciples that night, but never would again, in that way, until He did so with all of His Disciples in the perfected Kingdom to come after His return - which we proclaim.

It turns Communion from a funeral into a joyous anticipation of when we will all be together as one family in His full presence forever.

