

REFORMATION 500 WEEK 30: HEIDELBERG CATECHISM QA'S 80-82

Question 80: WHAT DIFFERENCE IS THERE BETWEEN THE LORD'S SUPPER AND THE POPE'S MASS? **The Lord's Supper testifies to us that we have full forgiveness of all our sins by the one sacrifice of Jesus Christ, which He Himself once accomplished on the cross; and that by the Holy Spirit we are engrafted into Christ, who, with His true body, is now in heaven at the right hand of the Father, and is there to be worshipped. But the Mass teaches that the living and the dead do not have forgiveness of sins through the sufferings of Christ, unless Christ is still daily offered for them by the priests, and that Christ is bodily under the form of bread and wine, and is therefore to be worshiped in them. And thus the Mass at bottom is nothing else than a denial of the one sacrifice and suffering of Jesus Christ, and an accursed idolatry.**

The first half of Question 80 is a brief summary of what was previously taught about the Lord's Supper in Questions 75-79. The second half summarizes the Roman Catholic Mass. The word *mass* "means 'to dismiss.' In the early days of Christianity, those who could not partake of the Lord's Supper were dismissed after the sermon and before the Lord's Supper" (Norman Jones, *Study Helps*).

Catholic doctrine teaches that Christ's sacrifice on the cross did not *fully* pay for all our sins; therefore, our faith in Christ is not enough to forgive *all* our sins. The cross only makes forgiveness *possible as long as* certain other conditions are met. The Mass is one of those conditions. The Mass teaches there is no forgiveness for the faithful (whether in this life or in purgatory) "*unless* Christ [whose flesh and blood are in the bread and wine] is still daily offered for them by the priests." Catholics believe the Mass is a sacrificial offering of Christ on the altar by an ordained priest. They believe that when Jesus said "Do this in remembrance of Me," He was making His apostles priests. The words "Do this" were *not* directed to all believers, but *only* to the apostles. "Do this" does not mean to eat the bread and drink the wine; it means "offer My body and blood in the form of bread and wine to God." Since Christ's sacrifice on the cross was not enough to turn away God's wrath against our sins, the priests have to re-sacrifice Christ in the form of bread and wine every day during Mass.

The Mass is a denial of the truth that Christ needed to be sacrificed **only once**, because on the cross He truly did FINISH paying for all our sins! He "does not need daily, as those high priests, to offer up sacrifices, first for His own sins and then for the people's, for this He did **once for all** when He offered up Himself" (Heb. 7:27); "with His own blood He entered the Most Holy Place **once for all**, having obtained *eternal redemption*" (Heb. 9:12, cf. vv.25-26); "we have been sanctified through the offering of the body of Jesus Christ **once for all**" (Heb. 10:10). He "offered **one sacrifice** for sins **forever**" (Heb. 10:12).

The Mass is an accursed idolatry, because it teaches people to worship bread and wine (which they think is Christ). "The Roman Church teaches that since Christ is really present in the bread and wine when transubstantiation takes place, He must be 'adored' (worshipped) in them. Therefore, when the priest holds up the wafer and cup (the host), all are to bow and worship those elements" (Jones, *Study Helps*). The Mass is an **accursed** [damnable] idolatry because it preaches a different gospel. "If anyone preaches any other gospel...let him be **accursed**" (Gal. 1:9).

In case we think this is too severe, let me quote from an honest Roman Catholic priest: "the authors of the Heidelberg Catechism understand exactly what is Catholic doctrine. *We do adore* Christ in the Eucharist. *We do* genuflect to It ... because the Eucharist is actually Jesus Christ...If Christ isn't there on the altar...then *we are idolaters* for worshipping whatever else is there" (*The Wanderer*, April 2, 1987).

Question 81: WHO ARE TO COME TO THE TABLE OF THE LORD? **Those who are displeased with themselves for their sins, yet trust that these are forgiven them, and that their remaining infirmity is covered by the suffering and death of Christ; who also desire more and more to strengthen their faith and to amend their life. But the unrepentant and hypocrites eat and drink judgment to themselves.**

Only believers have the benefits of Christ's sacrifice; therefore, only those who know themselves to be believers should partake of the symbols of those benefits. We learned from Question 2 that true believers know three things: sin, salvation, and service. Therefore, if we are displeased with ourselves for our sins [sin], trust that all our sins are forgiven for the sake of Christ [salvation], and desire more and more to strengthen our faith and to amend our life [service], then we are ready for the Lord's Supper. Paul speaks of the necessity of self-examination before partaking of the Lord's Supper (1 Cor. 11:28). The unrepentant and hypocrites "eat and drink judgment" to themselves (1 Cor. 11:29), "because they profane the covenant of God, by taking to themselves the signs of the covenant. They desire to appear in covenant with God, when in fact they are in league with the devil" (Ursinus, 428).

Question 82: ARE THEY, THEN, ALSO TO BE ADMITTED TO THIS SUPPER WHO SHOW THEMSELVES BY THEIR CONFESSION AND LIFE TO BE UNBELIEVING AND UNGODLY? **No, for thereby the covenant of God is profaned and His wrath provoked against the whole congregation; therefore, the Christian Church is bound, according to the order of Christ and His Apostles, to exclude such persons by the Office of the Keys until they amend their lives.**

It is the church's duty to admit to the Lord's Supper, first of all, those who are baptized members of the church (just as in the OT only those who were first circumcised were permitted to eat the Passover). Second, those "who are of a proper age to examine themselves.... The infant children of the church are, therefore, not admitted to the use of the Lord's supper, even though they are included among the number of the faithful." Third, since "the church is not able to judge in regard to that which is secret and hidden. It admits... all whom it hears and sees professing repentance and faith by confession, and the external deportment of life ["the church should carefully observe and inquire into the character of those who are admitted"] ... If the church were to admit to the Lord's Supper, knowingly and willingly those who by confession and life," declare themselves unbelievers or ungodly [Titus 1:16], the church would "profane the covenant of God, [which] is to commend and recognize those as the... friends of God, who are His enemies, and to represent God as...in league with hypocrites, and wicked men" (Ursinus, 429- 430). In which case, the wrath of God is kindled against the whole congregation (1 Cor. 11:30-31).

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