

PRESBYTERIANISM

Holy Sacraments

INTRODUCTION

- Does the term “sacrament” have Roman Catholic connotations?
- The RC sacraments include: Baptism, Eucharist, Confirmation, Penance, Marriage, Holy Orders, Last Rites
- They are visible signs and tangible “channels of God’s grace”
- “There are only two sacraments ordained by Christ our Lord in the gospel, Baptism and the Supper of the Lord “ (WCF 27.4)

WHAT IS A SACRAMENT?

- Presbyterians would say that sacraments are “holy signs and seals of the covenant of grace” (WCF 27.1)
- Signs are pictures pointing to Jesus Christ or a spiritual reality
- “What Jesus did here in Cana of Galilee was the first of the signs through which he revealed his glory; and his disciples believed in him” (Jn 2:11)
- Seals authenticate God’s promises to engender confidence that they can be trusted

HOW DO SACRAMENTS WORK?

- Sacraments are “**means**” of God’s grace. How?
- There is **no power** in the sacraments themselves to cause God’s grace
- Sacraments point to a **spiritual reality** or relationship
- They are **valid** because they are based on God’s command
- They are **efficacious**—they work—because the Spirit applies his benefits to the one who responds in faith

BAPTISM

- Roman Catholic: A means of saving grace because it awakes faith and effects salvation. Baptism eradicates original sin and infuses sanctifying grace
- Lutheran: Imparts saving grace on the one exercising true faith
- Presbyterian: It is the initiation into the covenant and a sign of salvation. For infants, baptism needs to be later confirmed
- Baptist: It is a token or testimony of salvation

INFANT BAPTISM

- Infants have been baptised since the apostolic period
- While adults take baptism as the starting point of a new life, infant baptism represents the **promise** of a faith journey not yet fully realised
- Infant baptism focuses on God's plan of salvation in which the family and the church play major roles to bring up the child in the fear of the Lord

INFANT BAPTISM

- Baptism continues the covenant made with Abraham and his seed:
- “I will establish my covenant as an everlasting covenant between me and you and your descendants after you for the generations to come, to be your God and the God of your descendants after you” (Gen 17:7)
- To seal the promise God gave Abraham a sign—circumcision—which was administered to Abraham and all males in his household

INFANT BAPTISM

- Baptism replaces circumcision as a sign that they belong to God (Acts 2:39)
- “Peter replied, ‘Repent and be baptized, every one of you, in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins. And you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit. ³⁹ The promise is for you and your children and for all who are far off—for all whom the Lord our God will call’” (Acts 2:38-39)
- Whole families were included in baptism just as in the OT families were included in the covenant (Acts 16:15, 33; 18:19)

THE LORD'S SUPPER

- Roman Catholic / Transubstantiation: The elements change into Christ's body and blood
- Lutheran / Consubstantiation: The elements do not change but his body is actually "in, with, or under" the bread
- Presbyterian / Reformed: Christ's body is not literally present in the elements but he is spiritually present in the partaking
- Baptist / Memorial: Christ is not present in the elements either literally or spiritually

THE LORD'S SUPPER

- According to Presbyterians, how do believers feed upon the body and blood of Christ?
- The Confession takes great pains to stress that we do not feed on Christ “corporeally or carnally,” but “spiritually” and yet “really and indeed” (WCF 29.7)
- Presbyterians believe that what is gained in taking this meal is spiritual nourishment and growth in grace

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

- Do you agree with the Reformed view of the Lord's Supper? Why or why not?
- What should be the maximum age for infant baptism?
- Is it appropriate for those infants baptised to take communion without having been confirmed?