

DEVOTIONAL AID FOR 30 NOVEMBER 2020 – 6 DECEMBER 2020



**UPPER
HUNTER**
PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH

Dear church family,

We come to the third and final week of looking at the Lord's Supper and what it means.

Q80 deals specifically with the Roman Catholic Mass and how it is not biblical. I will not attempt to improve on the Heidelberg Catechism's answer, but I simply encourage you to read Q80 and its answer several times so you understand why we do not attend Mass at the Roman Catholic church.

Q81 asks an important question: Who should come to the Lord's Table? This is a perennial question and an important one. The Catechism characteristically answers it pastorally and beautifully. It mentions three qualities of those who may come and partake in the Lord's Table. 1) Recognition of their own sins: Those who are unhappy with themselves because of their sins. 2) Faith in the finished work of Christ: Those who trust that their past, present, and future sins are all dealt with by Jesus's once-for-all sacrifice. 3) Renewed hearts: Those who want to trust Jesus more and be more godly. Putting them together, the Lord's Supper is for those who recognise their own sins, trust Jesus's death for our forgiveness, and want to live God's way. Negatively put, the Lord's Supper is not for people who pretend they are perfect, or think they are good enough for God.

Q82 asks a difficult question. You can read the original wording below, but essentially, it's asking whether some people should be excluded from the Lord's Supper. These days, exclusion of any kind will be seen as something undesirable and even wrong. But actually some exclusions are good and necessary. It depends on the reason and purpose. Here's an example of good and necessary exclusion. Only Australians can take official roles in our government. These roles are open for anyone regardless of their ethnic or cultural background, but they must be Australian citizens. Our government needs to exclude foreign nationals from occupying the official roles. This isn't racism. An immigrant from Japan or Iraq or England should be and are allowed to take a role in the government, provided he or she is an Australian citizen. The reason is obvious. Australia needs to be led by Australians. Similarly, exclusions that are necessary and good can be found in other areas too. Universities must exclude unqualified or fraudulent people from their professorship. Otherwise, universities cannot function as a place of higher learning. When it comes to the Lord's Supper, we need to exercise wise discipline in order to obey the Bible. Excluding some people from the Lord's Supper may be good and necessary. This is still difficult to do well in practice and we need to be wise in exercising this discipline of excluding some people from the Lord's Supper. Nevertheless, faithfulness to the Bible requires us to take the Lord's Supper seriously and exercise discipline where necessary.

These are difficult topics and some things will not make full sense until next week (hint: the keys of the kingdom), but I hope these questions and answers will enhance your sense of gratitude and joy the next time we celebrate the Lord's Supper.

Yours in Christ,

Timothy Lee

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THE HEIDELBERG CATECHISM¹

Lord's Day 30

Q80) How does the Lord's Supper differ from the Roman Catholic Mass?

A) The Lord's Supper declares to us that all our sins are completely forgiven through the one sacrifice of Jesus Christ, which he himself accomplished on the cross once for all. It also declares to us that the Holy Spirit grafts us into Christ, who with his true body is now in heaven at the right hand of the Father where he wants us to worship him.

¹ The text of the Catechism is usually from <https://threeforms.org/heidelberg-catechism/>, but time to time, for the sake of clarity, I have also adopted the translation used in *The Good News We Almost Forgot* by Kevin DeYoung.

But the Mass teaches that the living and the dead do not have their sins forgiven through the suffering of Christ unless Christ is still offered for them daily by the priests. It also teaches that Christ is bodily present under the form of bread and wine where Christ is therefore to be worshiped. Thus the Mass is basically nothing but a denial of the one sacrifice and suffering of Jesus Christ and a condemnable idolatry.

Q81) Who should come to the Lord's table?

A) Those who are displeased with themselves because of their sins, but who nevertheless trust that their sins are pardoned and that their remaining weakness is covered by the suffering and death of Christ, and who also desire more and more to strengthen their faith and to lead a better life. Hypocrites and those who are unrepentant, however, eat and drink judgment on themselves.

Q82) Should those be admitted to the Lord's Supper who show by what they profess and how they live that they are unbelieving and ungodly?

A) No, that would dishonour God's covenant and bring down God's wrath upon the entire congregation. Therefore, according to the instruction of Christ and his apostles, the Christian church is duty-bound to exclude such people, by the official use of the keys of the kingdom, until they reform their lives.

MATTHEW 11:28–30

28 "Come to me, all you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest. 29 Take my yoke upon you and learn from me, for I am gentle and humble in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. 30 For my yoke is easy and my burden is light."

Does Jesus want us to come to Him? Before we answer, ponder what Jesus said in the passage above. Specifically, who is Jesus calling? All who are weary and burdened. And by weariness and being burdened, Jesus isn't talking about feeling tired after a long day of manual labour. Jesus is talking about the burden of sin and guilt. He's talking about weariness in our hearts that comes from the knowledge of our own wrongdoings and of the coming judgment. Are you weary and burdened in this way? Then come to Jesus! He's calling you to relieve you from such dreadful weariness and burdens. The Lord's Table is the same. Come, if you know you are a sinner and you need a Saviour. Come, if you believe Jesus died for your sins. He will have grace for you at the Table.

1 CORINTHIANS 11:26-30

26 For as often as you eat this bread and drink the cup, you proclaim the Lord's death until he comes. 27 Whoever, therefore, eats the bread or drinks the cup of the Lord in an unworthy manner will be guilty concerning the body and blood of the Lord. 28 Let a person examine himself, then, and so eat of the bread and drink of the cup. 29 For anyone who eats and drinks without discerning the body eats and drinks judgment on himself. 30 That is why many of you are weak and ill, and some have died.

The Lord's Supper is a great blessing if we come to it with faith, that is, trusting that Jesus is your only hope, your only righteousness, your only credentials before God. But the same Supper can bring God's judgment upon us if we approach it in an unworthy manner. One such unworthy manner is to come to the Table thinking I am good enough for God and to assume that I deserve God's love. But the gospel tells us that I do not deserve God's love because of my sins, but God loves me despite my sins. Verse 28 says, let a person examine himself. This examining isn't meant to see if I can get a stamp of approval. It's to see myself in light of the gospel. The gospel tells me, "I am a terrible sinner, but Christ is a great Saviour." Therefore, we ought to come to the Lord's Table with a sense of humility and thankfulness because we know we are sinners, yet Christ's body was broken and His blood has been shed for sinners like me.