

# WESTMINSTER CONFESSION OF FAITH

## SHORTER CATECHISM

### LESSON # 45 (Q4LES6) - THE SACRAMENTS

#### 1. Prayer

#### 2. Bible reading: Genesis 17: 1 - 22

3. **Review:** In our last lesson, we discussed the application of God's Word. The Word teaches us what man is to believe concerning God, and what duty God requires of man. We learned that it is the Spirit of God which makes His Word an effectual means of convincing and converting sinner. We learned that, to be effectual for salvation, we must approach the Word with diligence, preparation and prayer, receive it with faith and love, lay it up in our hearts, and practice it in our lives.

4. **Introduction:** In this lesson, we will discuss SC questions 91, 92, and 93. These three questions deal with Christ's sacraments. Question 91 deals with how the sacraments become effectual means of salvation. The answer may sound familiar. Question 92 deals with the definition of a sacrament. And finally, question 93 identifies the New Testament sacraments. The discussion of the two New Testament sacraments will follow in the next two lessons. The topics for today are sacraments and their application.

#### 5. Questions & Answers:

**Question 91:** How do the sacraments become effectual means of salvation?

**Answer:** The sacraments become effectual means of salvation, not from any virtue in them, or him that doth administer them, but only by the blessing of Christ, and the working of his Spirit in them that by faith receive them.

**Question 92:** What is a sacrament?

**Answer:** A sacrament is a holy ordinance instituted by Christ; wherein, by sensible signs, Christ, and the benefits of the new covenant, are represented, sealed, and applied to believers.

**Question 93:** What are the sacraments of the New Testament?

**Answer:** The sacraments of the New Testament are, Baptism, and the Lord's Supper.

## 6. The SC, LC, and WCF

- a. While the SC covers the introduction to the sacraments in 3 questions, the LC uses 4 questions. SC q 91 and LC q 161 are identical, as are SC q92 and LC q 162. Their answers are essentially the same, although the LC answer is expanded, and uses some different terms. LC q 163 covers some ground which, if covered at all, is only implied in SC q 92. SC q 93 and LC q 164, and their respective answers, while worded differently, have the identical meaning. The WCF, Chapter 27, contains much the same information as the SC and LC.

## 7. How do the Sacraments become effectual means of salvation? (LC q 161, SC q 91)

- a. Both the SC and the LC begin their answers to this question by telling us what does not contribute to making the sacraments an effectual means of salvation.
- b. What does not make the sacraments effectual means of salvation?
  - The sacrament itself. (**Acts 8:13, 17 – 21** <sup>(17)</sup>*Then they laid their hands on them, and they received the Holy Ghost:* <sup>(18)</sup>*And when Simon saw that through laying on of the apostles' hands the Holy Ghost was given, he offered them money,* <sup>(19)</sup>*Saying, Give me also this power, that on whomsoever I lay hands, he may receive the Holy Ghost.* <sup>(20)</sup>*But Peter said unto him, Thy money perish with thee, because thou hast thought that the gift of God may be purchased with money.* <sup>(21)</sup>*Thou hast neither part nor lot in this matter: for thy heart is not right in the sight of God.*) Thou Simon had been baptized (v13), the partaking in the sacrament did not save him, as he demonstrates in verses 17 – 21.
  - The person administering the sacrament. (**1 Cor 3: 5 – 7** <sup>(5)</sup>*Who then is Paul, and who is Apollos, but ministers by whom ye believed, even as the Lord gave to every man?* <sup>(6)</sup>*I have planted, Apollos watered; but God gave the increase.* <sup>(7)</sup>*So then neither is he that planteth any thing, neither he that watereth; but God that giveth the increase.*) Thou Paul and Apollos ministered, it was God that saved.
- c. The WCF, chapter 27, para 3, supports this, with numerous scripture proofs. It says: "The grace which is exhibited in or by the sacraments rightly used is not conferred by any power in them: neither doth the efficacy of a sacrament depend upon the piety or intention of him that doth administer it:....."
- d. So if neither the sacrament itself, or the person administering the sacrament make it effectual to salvation, what does?

- The blessing of Christ. (**Matt 28: 19 – 20** <sup>“(19)”</sup>*Go ye therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost: <sup>(19)</sup>Teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you: and, lo, I am with you always, even unto the end of the world, Amen.”*)
  - The working of his Spirit. (**1 Cor 12:13** *“For by one Spirit are we all baptized into one body, whether we be Jews or Gentiles, whether we be bond or free; and have been all made to drink into one spirit.”*)
- e. A little review is in order here, as we seem to have developed a common theme. This could be important.
- Back in SC Q29 we learned that we are made partakers of the redemption purchased by Christ by the effectual application of it to us by the Holy Spirit.
  - In SC q 86 we learned that faith in Jesus Christ is a saving grace...a gift from God
  - And SC q 87 taught us the repentance unto life is also a saving grace... not our work, but a gift from God.
  - SC q88 taught us that the ordinances we are studying are made effectual to the elect for salvation
  - And in SC q 89, the Spirit of God makes the Word an effectual means of convincing and converting sinners.
  - And now, the sacraments are not effectual because of the sacrament itself, or the person administering it, but by Christ and His Spirit.
- f. Can anyone come up with this common theme?

It's God's work that saves us, not ours.

- g. And who are the sacraments intended for?

Only God's elect, those who through faith, receive them.

## **8. What is a sacrament? (LC q 162, SC q 92)**

- a. A sacrament is a holy ordinance, instituted by Christ, wherein, by sensible signs, Christ, and the benefit of the new covenant, are represented, sealed, and applied unto believers. (SC q 92)
- b. Is the term “sacrament” used in the Bible?
- No.
- c. Why do we use the term?

The things signified by the word “sacrament” are in God’s Word, and may therefore be used.

- d. So, would anyone like to take a shot at what the word “sacrament” means?

My New Webster’s 20<sup>th</sup> Century Dictionary says: “In ancient Rome; the military oath taken by every Roman soldier, pledging him to obey his commander, and not to desert his standard.” TV expands on this, and sheds more light on this subject. TV says: “The proper signification of the word sacrament, as it was of old used, is a military oath, whereby the general did oblige himself to be faithful unto his soldiers, and the soldiers did engage themselves to be faithful unto their general.”

- e. So, by definition, a sacrament is a two sided oath, whereby the man in charge vows to be faithful to his subjects, and the subjects vow to be faithful to the person in charge.
- f. The WCF, c27, p1 says: *“Sacraments are holy signs and seals of the covenant of grace, immediately instituted by God, to represent Christ and His benefits; and to confirm our interest in Him; as also, to put a visible difference between those that belong unto the Church, and the rest of the world; and solemnly to engage them to the services of God in Christ, according to His Word.”*
- g. So, a covenant is a two sided oath between God and man, where God pledges his covenant of grace to those who believe, and believers pledge to be the Lord’s, and to be true and faithful to Him.
- h. Whose ordinance are we pledging to be faithful to?

They are holy ordinances instituted by Christ. **(Gen 17:7 and I will establish my covenant between me and thee, and thy seed after thee, in their generations, for an everlasting covenant, to be a God unto thee, and to thy seed after thee.)**

- i. The LC adds question 163 at this point, which is not reflected in the SC. LC q 163 asks: “What are the parts of a sacrament? It answers: ‘The parts of a sacrament are two; the one an outward and sensible sign, used according to Christ’s own appointment; the other an inward and spiritual grace thereby signified.’”
- The sensible signs are the outward expression of the sacrament, as appointed by Christ in His Word. It is what is meant by “represented” in the SC q 92.

- The “inward and spiritual grace” thereby signified, are Christ, and the benefits of the new covenant. This is the “sealed” and “applied” in SC q92, meaning Christ’s covenant is sealed with, and applied to believers.
- j. To whom do the sacraments represent, seal and apply Christ, and the benefits of the new covenant.

To the faithful only.

## 9. Which are the sacraments of the New Testament.

a. The sacraments of the New Testament are:

- Baptism (**Matt 28: 19 – 20** <sup>“(19)</sup>*Go ye therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost: (19)Teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you: and, lo, I am with you always, even unto the end of the world, Amen.”*)
- The Lord’s Supper (**Matt 26: 26 – 28** <sup>“(26)</sup>*And as they were eating, Jesus took bread, and blessed it, and brake it, and gave it to the disciples, and said, Take, eat; this is my body. (27)And he took the cup, and gave thanks, and gave it to them, saying, drink ye all of it; (28)For this is my blood of the new testament, which is shed for many for the remission of sins.”*)

b. The WCF, c27p4 says: “There are only two sacraments ordained by Christ our Lord in the gospel; that is to say, Baptism and the Supper of the Lord: neither of which may be dispensed by any but by a minister of the Word lawfully ordained.”

c. How are the sacraments of the Old Testament and the New Testament connected?

The WCF, c27p5 says: “The sacraments of the Old Testament, in regard of the spiritual things thereby signified and exhibited, were, for substance, the same with those of the New.” (**1 Cor 10: 1 – 4** <sup>“(1)</sup>*Moreover, brethren, I would not that ye should be ignorant, how that all our fathers were under the cloud, and all passed through the sea: (2)And were all baptized unto Moses in the cloud and in the sea; (3)And did all eat the same spiritual meat; (4)And did all drink the same spiritual drink; for they drank of that spiritual Rock that followed them: and that Rock was Christ.”*)

d. The Old Testament sacraments were:

- Circumcision (New Testament Baptism)
- The passover (New Testament Lord’s Supper)

e. The WCF, c27p4 says that the sacraments are not to be administered except by “a minister of the Word lawfully ordained”. Is this correct. What about when no minister is available?

- 1 Cor 11:23 says: *“For I have received of the Lord that which also I delivered unto you, That the Lord Jesus, the same night in which he was betrayed, took bread: etc. Used with Matt 26: 27 – 28 and Matt 28:19 – 20, indicates that only Jesus, or his duly appointed representative can administer the sacraments.*
- However, elsewhere it say that wherever 2 or 3 are gathered together...etc.

## 10. Summary

Only the Spirit of God makes the sacraments effectual to salvation. The sacraments are an agreement between God and his church, whereby he pledges his grace, and we pledge our faithfulness. They consist of outward signs and an inward and spiritual grace. They are not to be participated in by those out of his church. The sacraments of the New Testament are Baptism, and the Lords Supper.