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**BIBLICAL TOPICS FOR STUDY – THE LORD’S SUPPER**

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In this study we will address the Lord’s Supper (in Greek, κυριακον δειπνον – Kuriakon deipnon), or Holy Supper; For Catholics, also called the Eucharist or Communion (This word is derived from Latin, communion = to share, to divide in common, which is translated into Greek as κοινωνία – koinōnía). I’ll talk a bit about the wine from biblical standpoint, and its relationship with the Last supper.

Let’s begin with the texts of the first three evangelists, Matthew, Mark and Luke, and the text written by the Apostle Paul in 1 Cor. 11: 17-34 (with emphasis in verses 23-26).

The gospel of Matthew was written by Matthew the tax collector, one of the twelve apostles, probably in the first years of the Christian era (50 AD), addressing basically to the Jewish readers because he quoted the evidence of the OT in support to the claims that Christians were doing about Jesus as the awaited Messiah. Thus, he makes the transition from the OT to the NT.

The gospel of Mark was written by John Mark, Barnabas’ cousin and son of Mary, the widow who offered her home for meetings of the Early Church (Acts 12: 12; 25; Acts 13: 13; Acts 15: 37-39; Acts 19: 29; Acts 27: 2; Col. 4: 10; Phlm. 24). He was a theologian and historian. Mark wrote the book around 50-65 AD, probably to Gentile believers in Rome and to whom he explains Jewish traditions clearly (Mk. 7:1-4; 14: 12; 15: 42).

The gospel of Luke was written by Luke, the Gentile physician, companion of Paul. He wrote to Theophilus, probably a Gentile who had just been converted, around 59-63 AD. It shows the largest variety of teaching, parables and events of Jesus’ life. It shows the interest of Jesus for the non-Jewish world and the poor.

Some festivities were described in the NT, keeping the Jewish laws given to Moses, as Passover, for example (Jn. 2: 13; 23; Jn. 6: 4; Jn. 11: 55; Matt. 26: 2; Mk. 14: 1; Lk. 22: 1; Acts 12: 3; Acts 20: 6). The others are: the New Year (Jn. 5: 1), the feast of Tabernacles (Jn. 7: 2; 37 cf. Lev. 23: 36; Num. 29: 35; Neh. 8: 18), Pentecost (Acts 2: 1; Acts 20: 16; 1 Cor. 16: 8), the Day of Atonement (Acts 27: 9, here called the Day of Fasting). But many things changed after Jesus’ death and resurrection. For example: the Feast of Tabernacles is no longer mentioned among the NT festivals celebrated by the new converts, the Christians (neither in the Acts of the Apostles nor in the letters).

We can remember the Passover instituted by God in the OT and described in Ex. 12: 1-28, where the Jews were told to eat the lamb roasted in the fire, the bitter herbs

and the unleavened bread, marking the door of their homes with the blood of the animal so that the Destroyer could spare them when passing through Egypt. For seven days they should eat unleavened bread. The blood on the doors of the houses was a symbol of liberation, the meat was a symbol of the Word of God, and the unleavened bread was a symbol of sanctification, the dominion of the Spirit over the flesh, evil and human malice (= yeast).

Paul also makes reference to the parallelism between the yeast of the flesh and the purity of our spirit that was rebuilt by God in the new birth:

- 1 Cor. 5: 6-8: “Your boasting is not a good thing. Do you not know that a little yeast leavens the whole batch of dough? Clean out the old yeast so that you may be a new batch, as you really are unleavened. For our paschal lamb, Christ, has been sacrificed. Therefore, let us celebrate the festival, not with the old yeast, the yeast of malice and evil, but with the unleavened bread of sincerity and truth.”

It is interesting to notice what is written in Ex. 12: 14; 17: “This day shall be a day of remembrance for you. You shall celebrate it as a festival to the Lord; throughout your generations you shall observe it as a perpetual ordinance... You shall observe the festival of unleavened bread, for on this very day I brought your companies out of the land of Egypt: you shall observe this day throughout your generations as a perpetual ordinance” (NRSV). This means that to keep the Passover was an ordinance of God to His children.

In first place, let's make clear that the Supper held by Jesus was celebrated the same day of the Passover of the Jews (Matt. 26: 17; 20; Mk. 14: 12; 17; Lk. 22: 7; 14). I'm saying this to remove the controversies created by some scholars about the correct day of the Lord's Supper, as well as the day of Jesus' death on the cross and their parallel with the Passover of the Old Testament. Yes, Jesus held the Supper with His disciples on the 14<sup>th</sup> day of Nisan, when they immolated the Passover Lamb (Jewish supper), and then explaining to them the meaning of 'new supper' with the bread and the wine, which would replace the first, i.e., a new covenant was being made between God and humanity: no longer the celebration of the deliverance from bondage in Egypt, but the ultimate deliverance of death generated by sin through the ultimate sacrifice of His Son on the cross, that is, Jesus, the lamb sacrificed in favor of men. He died on the day of the Jewish Passover, still on Friday, the 14<sup>th</sup> day of Nisan, which would end with the removal of His body from the cross, as the bible says, not to desecrate the Sabbath (Matt. 27: 57; Mk. 15: 42; Lk. 23: 54; Jn. 19: 31; cf. Ex. 20: 8-11, as to the Shabbat, celebrated by the Jews, and that starts after 18:00 on Friday and ends at 19:00 on Saturday). As for the fact that some scholars claim that Jesus did not spend three days in the tomb, that is, literal 72 hours, it is worth remembering that in biblical times the 'inclusive counting' of the days was done (any hour of the day was considered as the whole day), that is, naming successive days, not literally counting 24 hours. Therefore, Jesus died on Friday (1<sup>st</sup> day), stayed in the tomb on Saturday too (2<sup>nd</sup> day) and rose again on Sunday (3<sup>rd</sup> day).

The bible describes the 1<sup>st</sup> day of the feast of unleavened bread:

- Matt. 26: 17; 20: “On the first day of Unleavened Bread the disciples came to Jesus, saying, ‘Where do you want us to make the preparations for you to eat the Passover?’... When it was evening, he took his place with the twelve.”

- Mk. 14: 12; 17: “On the first day of Unleavened Bread, when the Passover lamb is sacrificed, his disciples said to him, ‘Where do you want us to go and make the preparations for you to eat the Passover?’... When it was evening, he came with the twelve.”

- Lk. 22: 7; 14: “Then came the day of Unleavened Bread, on which the Passover lamb had to be sacrificed ... When the hour came, he took his place at the table, and the apostles with him.”

In second place, we'll analyze the texts about the Supper of Jesus with His apostles:

- Matt. 26: 26-30: “While they were eating, Jesus took a loaf of bread, and after blessing it he broke it, gave it to the disciples, and said, ‘Take, eat; this is my body’. Then he took a cup, and after giving thanks he gave it to them, saying, ‘Drink from it, all of you; for this is my blood of the covenant, which is poured out for many for the forgiveness of sins. I tell you, I will never again drink of this fruit of the vine until that day when I drink it new with you in my Father’s kingdom.’ When they had sung the hymn, they went out to the Mount of Olives.”

- Mk. 14: 22-26: “While they were eating, he took a loaf of bread, and after blessing it he broke it, gave it to them, and said, ‘Take; this is my body.’ Then he took a cup, and after giving thanks he gave it to them, and all of them drank from it. He said to them, ‘This is my blood of the covenant, which is poured out for many. Truly I tell you, I will never again drink of the fruit of the vine until that day when I drink it new in the kingdom of God.’ When they had sung the hymn, they went out to the Mount of Olives.”

Luke, like all evangelists, describes the episode of the Last Supper:

- Lk. 22: 14-20 (Matt. 26: 26-30; Mk 14: 22-26; 1 Cor. 11: 23-25): “When the hour came, he took his place at the table, and the apostles with him. He said to them, ‘I have eagerly desired to eat this Passover with you before I suffer; for I tell you, I will not eat it until it is fulfilled in the kingdom of God.’ Then he took a cup, and after giving thanks he said, ‘Take this and divide it among yourselves; for I tell you that from now on I will not drink of the fruit of the vine until the kingdom of God comes.’ Then he took a loaf of bread, and when he had given thanks, he broke it and gave it to them, saying, ‘This is my body, which is given for you. Do this in remembrance of me.’ And he did the same with the cup after supper, saying, ‘This cup that is poured out for you is the new covenant in my blood.’” Luke, a disciple of Paul, was the only one of the evangelists who wrote “Do this in remembrance of me.”



Image of Matzah (plural = Matzot) made only with wheat flour, olive oil and salt.

The verb used in the supper for bread ('to break the bread') was correct, since the unleavened bread, not having time to leaven, consists only in a thin plate of dough, called matzah by Jews (plural, matzot), liable to be broken. Although no bone of Jesus' body was broken, the verb 'to break' symbolizes the injuries and bruises and wounds that his body suffered after the scourges.

In the three texts above, the bible says regarding the bread and cup of wine, which Jesus gave thanks: 'after giving thanks' [in Greek, eucharistêsas (ευχαριστήσα) = gave thanks, giving thanks, thanking]. Eucharistêsas is the participle of the verb Eucharistéo (to give thanks) = to be grateful, to express gratitude (towards); specially to say grace at a meal, to give thanks. Eucharistéo gives rise to the expression 'thanksgiving', 'recognition', in Greek, Eucharist (ευχαριστία).

During His ministry, Jesus had already made it clear that the bread was the symbol of His body, and the wine, the symbol of His blood to be shed in favor of men for the forgiveness of sins:

- Jn 6: 33; 35; 48-51; 53-58: "For the bread of God is that which comes down from heaven and gives life to the world"... Jesus said to them, 'I am the bread of life. Whoever comes to me will never be hungry, and whoever believes in me will never be thirsty'... I am the bread of life. Your ancestors ate the manna in the wilderness, and they died. This is the bread that comes down from heaven, so that one may eat of it and not die... 'I am the living bread that came down from heaven. Whoever eats of this bread will live forever; and the bread that I will give for the life of the world is my flesh'... So Jesus said to them, 'Very truly, I tell you, unless you eat the flesh of the Son of Man and drink his blood, you have no life in you. Those who eat my flesh and drink my blood have eternal life, and I will raise them up on the last day; for my flesh is true food and my blood is true drink. Those who eat my flesh and drink my blood abide in me, and I in them. Just as the living Father sent me, and I live because of the Father, so whoever eats me will live because of me. This is the bread that came down from heaven, not like that which your ancestors ate, and they died. But the one who eats this bread will live forever.'"

In other words: "Those who eat my flesh and drink my blood have eternal life, and I will raise them up on the last day" means, to receive the word and feed oneself on it (to eat my flesh), and accept and understand the sacrifice of the cross, that is, the forgiveness of sins and redemption ('drink my blood'). In other words: to accept the sacrifice of the body and blood of Christ to have eternal life. When Jesus said this, he scandalized the Jews, for the law forbade them to eat the flesh of animals with the blood (Lev 7: 26-27). The life of a creature was in the blood (Lev. 17: 11; 14; Deut. 12: 16; 23; Deut. 15: 23), that is, the blood of the animal atoned the sins of man, restoring his communion with God, the eternal life.

Bread was a parable of his own body submitted to the redemptive purpose of God (Heb. 10: 5-10); and His blood, shed in death, recalled the expiatory sacrifices of the OT, which was in the cup on the table. This cup, thereafter, was clothed with new meaning, as a memorial of a new Exodus held at Jerusalem (Lk. 9: 31).

In the texts written by the three Evangelists it is written that Jesus gave thanks and blessed the bread and broke it, and after giving thanks He gave the cup to His disciples to drink the wine. We can see that only Luke puts the phrase: "Do this in remembrance of me." Later, in the 1<sup>st</sup> Epistle to the Corinthians, Paul uses the same phrase ('Do this, as often as you drink it, in remembrance of me'), suggesting that this is an ordinance of Jesus:

- 1 Cor. 11: 23-26: "For I received from the Lord what I also handed on to you, that the Lord Jesus on the night when he was betrayed took a loaf of bread, and when he had

given thanks, he broke it and said, ‘This is my body that is for you. Do this in remembrance of me.’ In the same way he took the cup also, after supper, saying, ‘This cup is the new covenant in my blood. Do this, as often as you drink it, in remembrance of me.’ For as often as you eat this bread and drink the cup, you proclaim the Lord’s death until he comes.”

In this latter text of Paul, it is interesting to note the last sentence, where it says: “For as often as you eat this bread and drink the cup, you proclaim the Lord’s death until he comes.” Why ‘this bread?’ Which bread he was referring to? ‘This bread’ was the bread reserved for the Lord’s Supper, that is, consecrated to this purpose, unlike the bread used in the communal supper that was held in the Acts of the Apostles and instituted by the disciples of Jesus to break the bread from house to house with the poor (Acts 2: 42; 46-47; Acts 6: 1-3; Acts 20: 7). This communal supper was known as agape, love feast or feast of communion, to which the Apostle Paul refers in 1 Cor. 11: 17-22, before being performed the liturgical act of the Lord’s Supper (1 Cor. 11: 23-34), where he rebukes the attitude of the Corinthians, for they were not making the distinction between one and the other.

The communal supper in the NT replaced, symbolically, the sacrifice of fellowship offerings that was done in the temple. Besides, in the book of Acts of apostles, ‘to break the bread’ was a Hebrew expression meaning ‘to share a meal.’ The Fellowship Offering or peace offering (Lev. 3: 1-17) was of any animal without flaw from the flock or of a variety of bread. Its purpose was a voluntary act of worship and thanksgiving and communion (that’s why it was accompanied by a communal meal). As it was written above, the communal supper in the NT (‘to break the bread’) replaced, symbolically, the sacrifice of fellowship offerings that was made in the temple, since the burnt offering and the guilt offering and the sin offering had already been done by Jesus on the cross permanently.

Before proceeding with the Supper of Jesus, let’s talk a little about this text from 1 Cor. 11: 17-34, where the apostle rebukes attitude of the believers:

**17** Now in the following instructions I do not commend you, because when you come together it is not for the better but for the worse.

**18** For, to begin with, when you come together as a church, I hear that there are divisions among you; and to some extent I believe it.

**19** Indeed, there have to be factions among you, for only so will it become clear who among you are genuine.

**20** When you come together, it is not really to eat the Lord’s Supper.

**21** For when the time comes to eat, each of you goes ahead with your own supper, and one goes hungry and another becomes drunk.

**22** What! Do you not have homes to eat and drink in? Or do you show contempt for the church of God and humiliate those who have nothing? What should I say to you? Should I commend you? In this matter I do not commend you!

**23** For I received from the Lord what I also handed on to you, that the Lord Jesus on the night when he was betrayed took a loaf of bread,

**24** and when he had given thanks, he broke it and said, ‘This is my body that is for you. Do this in remembrance of me’.

**25** In the same way he took the cup also, after supper, saying, ‘This cup is the new covenant in my blood. Do this, as often as you drink it, in remembrance of me’.

**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 answerable for the body and blood of the Lord.

**28** Examine yourselves, and only then eat of the bread and drink of the cup.

**29** For all who eat and drink without discerning the body, eat and drink judgment against themselves.

**30** For this reason many of you are weak and ill, and some have died.

**31** But if we judged ourselves, we would not be judged.

**32** But when we are judged by the Lord, we are disciplined so that we may not be condemned along with the world.

**33** So then, my brothers and sisters, when you come together to eat, wait for one another.

**34** If you are hungry, eat at home, so that when you come together, it will not be for your condemnation. About the other things I will give instructions when I come.

In this passage, Paul says that the selfish behavior of the Corinthians made it impossible their participation in the Lord's Supper. As we said previously, usually the two suppers were made in sequence, i.e., the communal supper instituted by the disciples of Jesus, followed by liturgical supper that Paul held. Many wealthy Corinthians seem to have behaved badly at the table of the Lord in these communal meals. The rich despised the poor, and ate and got drunk before the poor were allowed to participate; so, some felt need, while others had too much. What should have been a bond of love and mutual affection (the agape supper, agape feast) was transformed into an instrument of discord and disunity. The poor were deprived of the food prepared for them, and the rich turned a party of charity in an orgy (gluttony and drunkenness). There were quarrels and divisions among them too, and idolatry mixed with the true doctrine of the apostles. The Corinthians came to the Lord's Table as to a common party, not discerning the body and blood of Jesus (the bread and wine) from a common food; in other words, they used more indecency in this sacred feast than they made in a civil party. This was very sinful and unpleasant to God.

In verse 27 Paul says: "Whoever, therefore, eats the bread or drinks the cup of the Lord in an unworthy manner will be answerable for the body and blood of the Lord." To eat the bread or drink the cup of the Lord in an unworthy manner means: in an irreverent manner; the person would be guilty of profaning what represents the body and blood of the Lord, so attracted God's judgment upon himself.

In the following verses (28-29) he says: "Examine yourselves, and only then eat of the bread and drink of the cup. For all who eat and drink without discerning the body, eat and drink judgment against themselves." This meant temporal judgments of various types (1 Cor. 11: 30) for not distinguish the sacred symbols of the body and the blood of the Lord (the bread and the wine) from a common food. For this reason, some were weak, or were punished with illness, and some died. Instead of being cleansed by the blood of Jesus, they were guilty of His blood. They were eating and drinking judgment to themselves; they provoked God, and thus became subject to condemnation, the spiritual judgment and eternal misery.

Paul thought that it was best to take away the love feasts (communal meals, the agape supper or agape feast) because of its abuse, though they have been practiced for a long time, and being appointed and instituted by the apostles.

In the Lord's Supper they invoked His name and prayed, stating (i.e., declaring) the institution of that ordinance by Jesus Himself, and then gave the broken bread to be eaten and the wine to be drunk with thanksgiving. Also they spoke that each person should examine himself, that is, to test their knowledge on what was being done and also the faith in Jesus and the repentance of their sins. It should not be admitted who could not examine himself, such as children, men who were furious and angry too, as well as those who had no knowledge of Christ or not enough knowledge, although they

considered themselves Christians, and others who could not examine himself. This was the manner of Paul and of the apostles to minister. Thus, the liturgical supper to which Paul referred was to be made in memory of Christ, to keep fresh in their minds His death by human sin and to celebrate our salvation and redemption through His sacrifice.



Thus, the Supper instituted by Jesus was for His followers to remember His sacrifice, that is, to celebrate His death and resurrection as a propitiation of sins and the conquest of salvation for all men. It didn't mean a supper to celebrate the communion with the brothers in the Body of Christ. It was established to feed the soul, not the body and, therefore, it should be separated from common banquets. When Apostle Paul writes (1 Cor. 10: 16-17): "The cup of blessing that we bless, is it not a sharing in the blood of Christ? The bread that we break, is it not a sharing in the body of Christ? Because there is one bread, we who are many are one body, for we all partake of the one Bread" (NRSV); or "Is not the cup of thanksgiving for which we give thanks a participation in the blood of Christ? And is not the bread that we break a participation in the body of Christ? Because there is one loaf, we, who are many, are one body, for we all share the one loaf" (NIV), he was referring to our participation in the sacrifice of the body and the blood of Jesus; our communion with Christ, confirming ourselves as children of God, but he was not referring to the communion with the brothers in Christ as occurred in agape's feast.

We can also say that the Supper instituted by Jesus that night with His disciples was replacing the traditional Jewish supper in the sense that now they knew the definitive covenant of God with men. And that supper became a commandment from Jesus Himself for people to remember His sacrifice on behalf of our salvation. The bread and wine were the symbol of His flesh and blood. The prayer of thanksgiving because of this divine act and the understanding with reverence to the elements placed there were enough to make it acceptable to God.

At Easter time, they would no longer celebrate the liberation from Egypt, but rather the sacrifice and resurrection of the Son of God to give salvation to men. We do not know what the celebration of the first Easter was like after the death and resurrection of Jesus, in the year 31 AD, by Jesus' disciples and followers; if they continued to meet in the temple or in homes, each of them with their family and friends, if they ate lamb or

other typical foods, but certainly, the motivation for the celebration was now different. It is worth remembering here that the breaking of bread in this ‘special supper’ was just to remind them of the definitive Passover made by Jesus; a symbol, that is, it was not the supper that would bring salvation but faith in Jesus. And the act of the Last Supper would be the expression of the hearts of believers, affirming that they were now children of God, and this was achieved through Jesus’ sacrifice. There is no special food to celebrate Easter.

As for keeping the routine of the ordinance, Jesus was not very clear about this. With regard to the Gentiles who were converting to Jesus, Paul took into consideration the characteristics of each congregation, the place, spiritual growth of that people and the interval that this kind of meal should be ministered, beginning to separate Lord’s Supper from the common meals. He gave priority to self-examination of each individual, always giving priority to the spiritual meaning of the commandment.

Therefore, it is not by routinely eating supper in church that we are saved or keep our salvation up to date. This is accomplished by our faith in Jesus and His ultimate atoning sacrifice for us. No one loses his salvation if does not eat supper on the day stipulated by the leader. What matters most is not the symbolism of bread and wine but the awareness of what Easter is, especially because the Easter event is celebrated once a year and church supper is held throughout the year. So, it is a mistake to say that the Lord’s Supper or Holy Communion was a substitute for the celebration of Easter.

## QUESTION

Now I ask a question for readers to reflect on: the fact that Jesus did not make the frequency of supper clear, just saying, “Take, eat [the bread]; this is my body... Then he took a cup, and after giving thanks he gave it to them, saying, ‘Drink from it, all of you; for this is my blood of the covenant, which is poured out for many for the forgiveness of sins’ or even “this do in remembrance of me” (Lk. 22: 14-20), wouldn’t it be a case of thinking that this would be a way of celebrating Christian Easter from that moment on? In other words, shouldn’t this liturgical meal be held once a year as an act of celebration of Easter? So yes, it would be a replacement for the Jewish Passover tradition.

## Details about wine from the biblical point of view



I want to make a parenthesis here to put some details about wine from the biblical point of view.

Bibliographical reference for this excerpt:

- J. D. Douglas – The New Bible Dictionary, 2nd edition 1995. Related chapters of the dictionary: Wine and strong drink, The Lord's Supper, Meals.

Modern customs in Palestine, among a people who are traditionally conservative regarding religious festivities, suggest that the wine used in the time of Jesus was fermented wine, wine with an alcohol content; neither grape juice nor sweet wine. In Jesus' time the only way to conserve grape juice was to use the methods of manufacture of wine known in Ancient times. Recalling the case of Noah who became drunk, we can infer that the drink used by the ancient peoples came from the grape had an alcoholic content. Without the fermentation of grape juice, which was wine, there was no other way to conserve it for a long time for consumption. Jesus drank His meals with this wine, both at the Last Supper and at the wedding feast at Cana, for it was the common wine used at important feasts or meals. In other words, Jesus, living in those days, accompanied the meals that He attended, drinking the drink that was presented to Him, so much that at the Last Supper the three evangelists write the words of Jesus saying that meal was the last time He was drinking wine with them: 'I will never again drink of this fruit of the vine' (Matthew); 'I will never again drink of the fruit of the vine' (Mark); 'from now on I will not drink of the fruit of the vine' (Luke), which tells us that wine was part of His meals while He was on earth. As for the poetic use of the expression 'fruit of the vine', doesn't matter if people interpret it as the grape or the wine. The fact is that all biblical writers have left clearly understood Jesus' holiness in everything He did, for His motives were holy, even taking a simple cup of wine in a wedding feast; much more at the Last Supper where the meaning of this act was extremely different! Let's read the texts:

- Matt. 26: 26-29 (Mk 14: 23-25; Lk 22: 17-18): "While they were eating, Jesus took a loaf of bread, and after blessing it he broke it, gave it to the disciples, and said, 'Take, eat; this is my body'. Then he took a cup, and after giving thanks he gave it to them, saying, 'Drink from it, all of you; for this is my blood of the covenant, which is poured out for many for the forgiveness of sins. I tell you, I will never again drink of this fruit of the vine until that day when I drink it new with you in my Father's kingdom'" (in Mk. 14: 25 it is written, "Truly I tell you, I will never again drink of the fruit of the vine until that day when I drink it new in the kingdom of God"; and in Lk. 22: 18 it is written, "for I tell you that from now on I will not drink of the fruit of the vine until the kingdom of God comes").

With the favorable climate on that land for planting the vine, we usually find the wine associated with the grain of cereal, both representing the abundant and adequate supply of food, as well as the gifts of life and blessings provided by God (Isaac's blessings on Jacob – Gen. 27: 28, "May God give you of the dew of heaven, and of the fatness of the earth, and plenty of grain and wine") and were acceptable to Him when offered as gratitude on the altar (Ex. 29: 40, "and with the first lamb one-tenth of a measure of choice flour mixed with one-fourth of a hin of beaten oil, and one-fourth of a hin of wine for a drink offering").

However, wine should be avoided when one engaged in priestly services (Lev. 10: 9-11: "Drink no wine or strong drink, neither you nor your sons, when you enter the tent of meeting, that you may not die; it is a statute forever throughout your generations. You are to distinguish between the holy and the common, and between the unclean and the clean; and you are to teach the people of Israel all the statutes that the Lord has spoken to them through Moses") or during the period of the vow of Naziriteship (Num.

6: 1-3: “The Lord spoke to Moses, saying: ‘Speak to the Israelites and say to them: When either men or women make a special vow, the vow of a nazirite, to separate themselves to the Lord, they shall separate themselves from wine and strong drink; they shall drink no wine vinegar or other vinegar, and shall not drink any grape juice or eat grapes, fresh or dried’”). In the case of the Rechabites, the abstinence from wine is due to the orientation of preserving life as a nomad. And the use of wine was not so much related to the abusive use of wine, but was associated with the planting of vines, sowing and building houses (Jer. 35: 6-7: “But they answered, ‘We will drink no wine, for our ancestor Jonadab son of Rechab commanded us, ‘You shall never drink wine, neither you nor your children; nor shall you ever build a house, or sow seed; nor shall you plant a vineyard, or even own one; but you shall live in tents all your days, that you may live many days in the land where you reside’”).

The bible shows the two aspects of wine, its correct use and its abuse, its benefits and its acceptance in the eyes of God and its curse. They are intertwined in the OT, so that wine can rejoice the heart of man (Ps. 104: 15: “... and wine to gladden the human heart, oil to make the face shine, and bread to strengthen the human heart”) – not the joy of drunkenness, but of the circumstances in which wine is drunk (my note) – or it may make man’s mind err by misuse (Isa. 28: 7: “These also reel with wine and stagger with strong drink; the priest and the prophet reel with strong drink, they are confused with wine, they stagger with strong drink; they err in vision, they stumble in giving judgment” – NRSV / KJV: “But they also have erred through wine, and through strong drink are out of the way; the priest and the prophet have erred through strong drink, they are swallowed up of wine, they are out of the way through strong drink; they err in vision, they stumble in judgment”).

Wine can be associated to joy (Ecc. 10: 19: “Feasts are made for laughter; wine gladdens life, and money meets every need”) or to the wrath of man (Isa. 5: 11: “Ah, you who rise early in the morning in pursuit of strong drink, who linger in the evening to be inflamed by wine”); it shows the truth hidden within human flesh, as happened with Noah (Gen. 9: 20-21: “Noah, a man of the soil, was the first to plant a vineyard. He drank some of the wine and became drunk, and he lay uncovered in his tent”), or else, as it happened in the hands of Melchizedek, wine was used to honor Abraham (Gen. 14: 18-19: “And King Melchizedek of Salem brought out bread and wine; he was priest of God Most High. He blessed him and said, ‘Blessed be Abram by God Most High, maker of heaven and earth’”). Let us remember that Melchizedek foreshadows Jesus in his priesthood.

In metaphorical sense, the same characteristics can be observed. Wine can represent what God Himself has prepared (Prov. 9: 5: “Come [*Wisdom says*], eat of my bread and drink of the wine I have mixed”), which He offers to all those who receive it into their hands (Isa. 55: 1: “Ho, everyone who thirsts, come to the waters; and you that have no money, come, buy and eat! Come, buy wine and milk without money and without price”), as well as a precious fruit of man’s work and acknowledged by God (Isa. 62: 8: “The Lord has sworn by his right hand and by his mighty arm: I will not again give your grain to be food for your enemies, and foreigners shall not drink the wine for which you have labored”). On the other hand, wine may symbolize the intoxicating influence of Babylonian supremacy which brings ruin (Jer. 51: 7: “Babylon was a golden cup in the Lord’s hand, making all the earth drunken; the nations drank of her wine, and so the nations went mad”), at the same time that she herself will be intoxicated by the wine of the wrath of the Lord (Jer. 51: 56-57: “for a destroyer has come against her, against Babylon; her warriors are taken, their bows are broken; for the Lord is a God of recompense, he will repay in full. I will make her officials and her sages drunk, also her

governors, her deputies, and her warriors; they shall sleep a perpetual sleep and never wake, says the King, whose name is the Lord of hosts”). The bible also speaks of the cup of God’s wrath – Isa. 51: 17: “Rouse yourself, rouse yourself! Stand up, O Jerusalem, you who have drunk at the hand of the Lord the cup of his wrath, who have drunk to the dregs the bowl of staggering.” In other passages this wrath is figuratively described as: “cup with foaming wine, well mixed” (Ps 75: 8), “the wine of wrath” (Jer. 25: 15), “the wine of God’s wrath” (Rev. 14: 10), “the wine-cup of the fury of his wrath” (Rev. 16: 19).

In the NT the bible also shows the two aspects of wine: the good and the bad. John the Baptist should abstain from wine because of his separation as a Nazirite (Lk 1: 15: “for he will be great in the sight of the Lord. He must never drink wine or strong drink; even before his birth he will be filled with the Holy Spirit”), as well as Samson (Judg. 13: 4-5; 7; 14). One of them obeyed the rule, the other did not (Samson’s banquet was a feast of wine).

As I said in the beginning of this comment, Jesus was present at the marriage at Cana in Galilee, and supplied the lack of the drink quite abundantly. No one would serve grape juice at a wedding, not even being a Christian. At this feast the bride and groom served wine, as it was done at all wedding parties. And the quality of the wine that Jesus provided must have been of the best, given the observation made by the steward. The comment made in Jn. 2: 9-10 is interesting. Let’s explain better. It is written, “When the steward tasted the water that had become wine, and did not know where it came from (though the servants who had drawn the water knew), the steward called the bridegroom and said to him, ‘Everyone serves the good wine first, and then the inferior wine after the guests have become drunk. But you have kept the good wine until now.’” He said this because it was customary to initially put in the normal wine. After some time it was diluted in water in proportion of one to two and by the end of the party it was already in one for five, that is, it had already lost a lot of its appearance and flavor. Jesus might have miraculously produced a wine with the correct bouquet and the correct percentage of fermentation, even because He was there for other purposes than to stimulate drunkards.

Jesus’ willingness to eat with sinners and tax collectors drew upon Him the charge that He was a glutton and a wine-drinker. Jesus, as a common man, went to parties and ate and drank normally, both with Sadducees, Pharisees and Scribes and tax collectors and sinners; that’s why He was accused of being a glutton and wine-drinker compared with John the Baptist who was a Nazirite and couldn’t do this: “For John the Baptist has come eating no bread and drinking no wine, and you say, ‘He has a demon’; the Son of Man has come eating and drinking, and you say, ‘Look, a glutton and a drunkard (‘oinopotês’ = drunkard), a friend of tax collectors and sinners!’” (Lk. 7: 33-34 cf. Matt. 11: 18-19).

He also used wine in His illustrations, such as in Mk. 2: 22, when He talks about putting new wine into new wineskins, for if it were done otherwise, that is, if wine were put into old wineskins they would burst for not supporting the subsequent fermentation (and expansion) of the new wine in their rigid skins. Metaphorically speaking, this meant that Jesus’ new teaching points to the life and power of the Spirit of God. The conventional formalities of the entire Jewish system and its rigid norms, and the human heart accustomed to old patterns would break apart with the new doctrine. The ‘skins’ would have to be redone according to the challenge and demands of the new era that had come.

Also in the book of Revelation there is a reference to the misuse of wine, where the inhabitants of the earth are described as being drunk by the fornications of Babylon

(Rev. 17: 2), while the prostitute herself, representing Babylon, appears drunk with the blood of the saints and the blood of the witnesses to Jesus (Rev. 17: 6), the faithful believers.

In Paul's case, especially the problematic church in Corinth led him to reprove the misuse of wine (drunkenness; 1 Cor. 6: 10; 1 Cor. 11: 21), exhorting his readers to let themselves be controlled and be filled with the Holy Spirit (Eph 5: 18: "Do not get drunk with wine, for that is debauchery; but be filled with the Spirit"), instead of getting drunk by the wine. There is a big difference between drinking a glass of wine at the Passover celebration and getting drunk, or disrespecting the liturgical act.

For many people, what happened at Pentecost with the apostles, and with Hannah the mother of Samuel, before the priest Eli, when they were clothed with the Holy Spirit's anointing, seemed a drunken state, of ingestion of strong drink. It was a way of people and Satan to mock the manifestations of God in the midst of His people. The people and the priests, indeed, had sinned greatly in this over the ages. Therefore, God had used prophets like Amos and Hosea to rebuke them:

- Am. 2: 11-12: "And I raised up some of your children to be prophets and some of your youths to be nazirites. Is it not indeed so, O people of Israel?" says the Lord. 'But you made the nazirites drink wine, and commanded the prophets, saying, 'You shall not prophesy.'"

- Hos. 4: 11; Hos. 5: 2: "... whoredom. Wine and new wine take away the understanding."

- Hos. 9: 2; 4: "Threshing floor and wine vat shall not feed them, and the new wine shall fail them... They shall not pour drink offerings of wine to the Lord, and their sacrifices shall not please him. Such sacrifices shall be like mourners' bread; all who eat of it shall be defiled; for their bread shall be for their hunger only; it shall not come to the house of the Lord."

Timothy received from Paul the guidance to drink some wine, instead of drinking only water, because of the medical properties of wine over the constant infirmities of his disciple (1 Tim. 5: 23: "No longer drink only water, but take a little wine for the sake of your stomach and your frequent ailments"). This doesn't mean he should mix water in the wine, as some religious people like to explain so as not to generate the idea that Paul was stimulating alcoholism. It just means that it was for Timothy, once in a while, to drink wine instead of water to improve some uncomfortable symptom in his body. Timothy seemed to have had a tendency to undue ascetic rigor on this point, and it seems that he had a weak physical constitution. When it comes to Timothy's health, not just wine, but food should be considered (1 Tim. 4: 1-5) so that he could perform his duties as overseer correctly. Although the flesh should not be encouraged by its lusts (1 Tim. 5: 22b – 'Keep yourself pure'), it was appropriate for him to take care of his health, for it should not be harmed by too much severity in food, or by hard studies, frequent ministrations and tireless pain and work that he endured when spreading the Gospel of Christ.

Paul's guidance was different from that which was mentioned about the use of wine by the Good Samaritan, for here the wine was used with antiseptic properties so that oil (as the balsamic oil) could then relieve the pain of the wounded man and speed the healing of the wound. Nowadays, science talks about many beneficial effects of wine in small quantities on various organs of the body, especially the heart. Not much is said about its effect on the stomach, except that some of its chemical components restrict the adverse effects of fatty foods, going against cholesterol and lowering free radicals, thus slowing cell aging. But it is known that in the second century AD the Roman physician Galenus used wine to heal the wounds of the gladiators, acting as a disinfectant,

especially when the cuts with swords caused evisceration (excision of the viscera of the abdomen).

In the Epistles of Paul there is always mention of the excess of alcohol bringing injury to the body, soul and spirit, especially the Christian with a position of leadership in the church, such as bishops and deacons (1 Tim. 3: 2-3; 8; Tit. 2: 3: “Now a bishop must be above reproach, married only once, temperate, sensible, respectable, hospitable, an apt teacher, not a drunkard, not violent but gentle, not quarrelsome, and not a lover of money... Deacons likewise must be serious, not double-tongued, not indulging in much wine, not greedy for money...Likewise, tell the older women to be reverent in behavior, not to be slanderers or slaves to drink; they are to teach what is good”).

Since the OT, God forbade priests to drink wine or any strong drink when they entered the Tent of Meeting to minister lest they would be led by other spirit than Spirit of God. But they could drink wine (Hebrew, yayim) when they were not in the service of God; in the marriage of a daughter, for example.

It is obvious that alcoholism, apart from being a medical disorder, is considered a sign of deafness to spiritual things and a contempt for the imminent coming of Jesus (Rom. 13: 13; Lk 21: 34), as well as an irreverence towards the Lord’s table, and with the brethren who are in fellowship in Christ. Some verses serve as an example of what was said: Rom. 14: 3-5; 17; 20-21; 1 Cor. 10: 25-27; 30-32; 1 Tim. 4: 3-5; Tit. 1: 15.

#### **Words used in the bible for wine:**

The term ‘new wine’ or ‘must’ [Hebrew, tîrôsh; Lexicon Strong’s Concordance #8492 Hebrew: must or fresh grape-juice (as just squeezed out); by implication (rarely) fermented wine: (new, sweet) wine] represents the first juice that flow before and soon after the winepress being trodden. After being trod into the winepress, the grapes poured their juice into a vat. That juice was called ‘new wine’ – and the Jews drank it in that state (Before the fermentation was finished). This word never refers to the fermented beverage, but always to the unfermented product of the vine, such as the juice still in the bunch of grapes (Is 65: 8), or the sweet juice of freshly harvested grapes (Deut. 11: 14; Prov. 3: 10, Jl 2: 24). Tîrôsh (תִּירוֹשׁ) appears 37 times in the Old Testament: Gen. 27: 28 wine; Gen. 27: 37 wine; Num. 18: 12 wine; Deut. 7: 13 wine; Deut. 11: 14 wine; Deut. 12: 7 wine; Deut. 14: 23 wine; Deut. 18: 4 wine; Deut. 28: 51 wine; Deut. 33: 28 wine; Jdg. 9: 13 wine; 2 Kin. 18: 32 wine; 2 Chr. 31: 5 wine; 2 Chr. 32: 28 wine; Neh. 5: 11 wine; Neh. 10: 37 wine; Neh. 10: 39 new wine; Neh. 13: 5 new wine; Neh. 13: 12 new wine; Ps 4: 7 wine; Prov. 3: 10 new wine; Isa. 24: 7 wine; Isa. 36: 17 wine; Isa. 62: 8 wine; Isa. 65: 8 new wine; Jer. 31: 12 wine; Hos. 2: 8 wine; Hos. 2: 9 wine; Hos. 2: 22 wine; Hos. 4: 11 new wine; Hos. 7: 14 wine; Hos. 9: 2 new wine; Jl. 1: 10 new wine; Jl. 2: 19 wine; Jl. 2: 24 wine; Mic. 6: 15 sweet wine; Hag.1: 11 new wine.

Fermentation occurs when enzymes produced by bacteria or fungi come in contact with the must, and begin to act. In the case of grape juice, these bacteria, feeding on the natural sugar from the fruit, produce enzymes that convert that sugar into carbon dioxide and alcohol. The gas escapes, leaving only the alcohol. The fermentation begins within six hours after maceration, while the juice is still in the tanks, and slowly goes on for a period of several months. So we can say that this is fermented grape juice. So it would be particularly potent, and a possible explanation for what, on the day of Pentecost, seemed to be a state of drunkenness (Acts 2: 13: “But others sneered and said, ‘They are filled with new wine’ [‘These men are full of new wine’ – KJV]”). The Greek word for new wine or must is Gleukos (γλευκος – it appears only once in the bible in Acts 2: 13, and means ‘sweet wine’, that is, most properly, the fresh juice, but with more sugar, already started the process of fermentation (perhaps maintained for 1

year) and, therefore, ‘highly inebriating’, ‘fermented wine’, ‘new wine’ (Lexicon Strong’s Concordance #g1098). The grape harvest of the current year (which occurs in the month of Tammuz, corresponding to June-July) had not yet arrived (For Pentecost was celebrated on the sixth day of the month of Siwan – May-June, a little earlier).

During the aging of the wine it was kept in wineskins or bottles, which had a kind of vent to eliminate carbon dioxide (resulting from the unfolding of sugars in alcohol through fermentation) and prevent the entry of oxygen, lest they turned into vinegar. The longer the wines rested, the more the lees rushed to the bottom of the container and they were clarified, improving their bouquet and flavor. The lees look like raw amethyst crystal in the bottom of a wine cask. Then the wines were transported to other receptacles. The bible refers to this in many ways: Job 32: 19 (‘vent’); Isa. 25: 6 (‘well-aged wines strained clear’); Jer. 13: 12 (‘wine-jar’); Jer. 48: 11 (‘like wine on its dregs’ = lees); Zeph. 1: 12 (‘dregs’); Lk 5: 39 (“And no one after drinking old wine desires new wine, but says, ‘The old is good’”).



The skin or wineskin in the bible (KJV: flask of water – Gen. 21: 14-15; 19; bottles of wine (KJV) or wineskins (NIV) – Josh. 9: 13; skin bag – Job 32: 19; or skin bottle – Josh. 9: 13), in Latin: pelle, is usually made of goat skin, more rarely of another animal (sheep, kid or ox), and used to carry liquids (water, olive oil, milk, wine), butter or cheese. To make a wineskin, the animal was killed and its head and paws were cut off. Then all the viscera were removed, if possible without opening the animal’s belly. Then the leather was tanned with oak or acacia bark, and the hair was left outside if the bottles were used to store milk, butter, cheese and water. They were tanned not to impart an unpleasant taste to the water preserved in them. However, tanning was more carefully done when they were intended to store oil or wine, and the hair was removed. The wineskin bags were sometimes hung where they could be smoked to protect them from insects, or so that the wine quickly acquired certain desired properties. On the other hand, when they were not in use, the wineskins might have been hung in a room without a chimney, and so they would be darkened by the smoke from the burning fire. Such wineskins soon lost their elasticity and got wrinkled. Perhaps, it was thinking of this that the psalmist, desolate because of many tribulations, said, “For I have become like a wineskin in the smoke, yet I have not forgotten your statutes” (Ps. 119: 83).



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The words used in the bible for fermented wine are: ‘chomets’ (חֲמוֹץ), also written hômeç (vinegar), yayin (יַיִן – translated ‘wine’) and shekhâr (שֶׁכָּר – ‘strong drink’).

1) Vinegar – an ordinary drink of the workers of the fields (Ruth 2: 14) where they dipped their bread, and of the soldiers of the lower classes [a mixture of water and wine or other alcoholic beverages with an acetic fermentation, that is, the transformation of the alcohol produced in the fermentation of wine into acetic acid]. In other words: if the wine is not properly protected against oxidation, it is converted into acetic acid, or vinegar. The ‘posca’ of the Romans was very similar to that of the Hebrew workers. It was offered to Jesus on the cross, and it was somewhat different from the analgesic tempered with myrrh that He had previously refused (Matt. 27: 34; Mk. 15: 23 – ‘wine mixed with gall’, ‘wine mixed with myrrh’: the ‘strong drink’, i.e., the wine with high alcohol content mixed with myrrh given by Jewish women to the sentenced to cross so that they could withstand the punishment and suffering. ‘Myrrh’ originates from ‘maror’ or ‘murr’, meaning ‘bitter’, so it is bitter and is often used in the bible as synonymous with gall). In Greek, vinegar is called ‘oxous’ or ‘oxos.’ In Hebrew (Rut. 2: 14) is ‘chomets’, also written ‘hômeç’ (vinegar). The word vinegar (in Greek: oxous – οξος) was used in Jn. 19: 28-30, when they offered vinegar to Jesus on the cross [NRSV: ‘sour wine’; KJV: ‘vinegar’].

2) Another word in the bible used for wine is: Yayin (יַיִן), used 141 times in the Old Testament to indicate various types of fermented wine. Its Greek equivalent in the NT is ‘oinos’ (οἶνος) as it is written at the wedding feast of Cana in Galilee (Jn. 2: 3; 9-10).

3) Shekhār (שֶׁכָּר, 'strong drink'), the beverage with high alcohol content forbidden to the priests in the OT (Lev. 10: 9 – wine and strong drink) and Nazirites, and often used by the wicked to get drunk. The equivalent of shekhār (שֶׁכָּר – 1 Sam. 1: 15; Num. 6: 3) in Greek is 'sikera' (σικερα – Lk 1: 15: "for he will be great in the sight of the Lord. He must never drink wine or strong drink; even before his birth he will be filled with the Holy Spirit"). The word Shekhār ('strong drink') appears 23 times in the Old Testament and refers more often to other fermented beverages, perhaps made from palm fruit juice, pomegranate, apple, or date, or else, fermented drink of barley. However, wine of high alcohol content is not excluded.

Now, let's talk a little about the type of wine and the way it is administered at Jewish, Catholic and Protestant religious festivals, especially at the Lord's Supper of these last two groups (The Lord's supper or Eucharist).

Jews use fermented wine with 7% of alcohol content (yayin), not grape juice or must (tirosh), in their religious festivals. In the special case of Shabbat, they use the soft red wine (sweet, not dry), Guefen Kosher Wine (one of the most used brands). In the same way as it was said to Aaron and his sons, wine is permitted to the Kohen (priest) of the Jewish congregation out of the moment of his priesthood (as was in the Tent of the Meeting in the OT). At some other feasts they use dry wine, but there is no specific reason for that. Guefen is the same wine with a low degree of alcoholic fermentation used in the Passover and Jewish New Year feasts (Rosh haShannah). 'Kosher' in Hebrew means 'permitted', 'proper' or 'good.' It is part of the ritual of preparing food according to Jewish laws. At their festivals, they usually drink the full-bodied wine, not diluted in water.

On the other hand, Catholics use 'canonical wine', also for liturgical purposes (Eucharist) and with a lower concentration of alcohol (7-8%) than normal wine (of 12%), but some friars or priests put a little water in the cup. Formerly, only the priest drank the wine, and the faithful only the communion wafer. Today, the communion wafer has been dipped in wine. In Europe it is customary to perform the Eucharist with white wine instead of red wine. The explanations are not very clear for this. Also there, the communion wafer is different from ours (in America); it more resembles the Matzot (the unleavened bread of the Jews).

In the Orthodox liturgy the wine is served to all the faithful (including children) with a spoon.

Evangelical Christians (the Protestants) have the custom of distributing bread to the faithful (without a uniform character among different denominations, but depending on the leader of each congregation, often the loaf of bread itself cut into small pieces). The small plastic cup is filled with grape juice and distributed to people.

What happened after the death of the Lord's disciples and Paul's?

After the death of the Lord's disciples and Paul's and the weakening of the Early Christian Church founded by them on the doctrine of Jesus, in addition to the rise of Rome and the religious heresies from pagan peoples, some early Christians had already linked the mysticism to the Lord's Supper, rejecting the biblical concept of a simple remembrance of the death and the blood shed by Christ. Mithraism is an example of this. Mithraism was a religion in the Roman Empire from the first to the fourth century AD, very popular, especially among soldiers and several Roman emperors, until Constantine replaced it by Christianity. One of the main characteristics of Mithraism was a sacrificial meal, which involved eating the meat and drinking the blood of a bull. Mithras, the god of Mithraism, was present in the flesh and blood of the bull, and when consumed, he granted salvation to those who took part in the sacrificial meal. This religion also had seven sacraments, which makes it undeniably similar to Roman

Catholicism. The emperor Constantine and his successors found an easy substitute for the sacrificial meal of Mithraism in concept of the Lord's Supper (Christian Communion, known today as 'Eucharist' in the Catholic Mass), due to the doctrines of transubstantiation and consubstantiation, that influenced much later, even the Protestant Reformation through Luther, Calvin and Zwingli.



The communion wafer

In Catholicism, the Lord's Supper or Holy Communion is also called Eucharist (Greek: *ευχαριστια* = 'thanksgiving', 'recognition') or Communion. The Matzah was replaced by the 'communion wafer' in Latin, 'hostiam' meaning 'victim', that is, Jesus is the Lamb without guilt, immolated in sacrifice to God, the victim of ourselves, human beings, for the remission of our sins. The communion wafers have 2 sizes: 3 centimeters in diameter, weighing 0.6 grams, for the faithful, and 7.8 centimeters for the priests. The most interesting of all is that until a short time ago Catholics only ate the communion wafer, but only the priest drank the wine. Nowadays, some priests dip the wafer into the wine. To participate in the Eucharist is necessary to be fully incorporated into the Catholic Church and in a state of grace, that is, without consciousness of mortal sin (otherwise, the person must first receive the sacrament of reconciliation – to confess the sin and do the penance that is determined by the religious leader). It's also necessary the fast prescribed by the Church, the state of spirit of being in awe of God and the proper attitude of body (gestures and dress) as a sign of respect for Christ.

The Catholic Church supports the doctrine of 'transubstantiation' that says: after the consecration of bread and wine, there is the real presence of Jesus Christ in His body, blood, soul and divinity in these elements, i.e., the appearance remains like bread and wine, but the substance is modified; it becomes the very body and blood of Christ. Transubstantiation is opposed to the doctrine of 'consubstantiation' that says: the bread and wine remain unchanged, that is, remain bread and wine. The doctrine of transubstantiation appeared in the West after the schism between the Catholic Church and the Eastern Orthodox and Oriental Orthodox Churches (1054 AD). The Eastern

Orthodox and Oriental Orthodox Churches, the Anglican and Calvinistic Churches believe in the real presence, but not in transubstantiation. The bread in the Orthodox liturgy is fermented (symbolizing the new nature in Christ) and the wine is served to all the faithful (including children), served with a spoon. In the Eastern Orthodox and Oriental Orthodox Churches there is no theological explanation of what happens with the elements in the Divine Liturgy – this is regarded as a divine mystery.

Lutherans also believe that in the bread and wine there is the real presence of Jesus Christ in His body, blood, soul and divinity, but these elements do not turn into His flesh and blood, as states the doctrine of transubstantiation of the Catholics. To Lutherans this doctrine is called ‘Sacramental Union’, which has caused a lot of confusion with the term ‘consubstantiation’, which, as we saw above, means that there is the real presence of Jesus Christ at the Holy Communion, but the bread and the wine remain unchanged, i.e., they remain bread and wine. In consubstantiation, the substances of the body and blood of Christ join the substance of the bread and wine like the divinity of Jesus joined the flesh during His human incarnation, living both concurrently inside Him. Some Lutherans celebrate the Eucharist, or Holy Communion, weekly; others celebrate every two weeks, monthly, or even quarterly, unlike the Catholic Church, performing the ritual at all Masses. According to the thought of Luther, during the consecration, the substance of the body and blood of Christ joins the substance of the bread and wine, remaining united only after the consecration and during the use of the sacrament. Although with so many theological explanations by the Lutherans differentiating the term ‘Sacramental Union’ from ‘consubstantiation’, under the spiritual point of view it is the same thing.

As mentioned above, the doctrinal concepts of the Catholic Church around the Eucharist influenced even the Reformation by Luther, Calvin and Zwingli. As for the Lord’s Supper we can say:

- Martin Luther (1483-1546), leader of the Protestant Reformation in Germany took literally Jesus’ words (‘this is my body’).

- Ulrich Zwingli or Huldrych Zwingli (1484-1531) was a Swiss theologian and principal leader of the Protestant Reformation in Switzerland. He defended the symbolic character of the Eucharist, unlike Luther. For him, the Supper recalls the sacrifice of Christ until He returns; this is a position called ‘memorialism.’ Baptist churches are based on Zwingli regarding the Lord’s Supper, where the bread and wine are only elements that symbolize the body of Christ. Instead of the term ‘sacrament’ is used the term ‘ordinance’, that is, a commandment. According to Catholic doctrine, sacrament is the sacred sign instituted by Jesus Christ to grant divine salvation to those who, as receiving Him, make a profession of faith (a public confession of any faith). There are seven sacraments: baptism, chrism (confirmation of baptism), the Eucharist, penance or confession, the order (gives the power to exercise ecclesiastical functions), marriage and extreme unction (to those who are dying). However, the bible says that it’s not necessary to do any of this to achieve salvation; just believe in Jesus and declare Him as the one Lord in our lives (Rom. 10: 9-10). Thus, if the supper represents the symbolic act of the death and resurrection of Jesus to give us salvation, how then, we must do it to achieve salvation?

- Calvin (1509-1564), in turn, is opposed to Zwingli saying that Jesus is present at the time of the supper, not in the elements, but spiritually, and later this presence is communicated to the believers. To this way of understanding one gives the name of ‘spiritual presence.’

- Evangelical Churches, in general, rely on Zwingli's theory, where the bread and the wine are only elements that symbolize the body of Christ. The Eucharist is called the 'the Lord's Supper' or 'Holy Communion.'

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