

The Sacrament of the Holy Supper
The Belgic Confession, Article 35

1. The Scripture: John 6:53-58

So Jesus said to them, “Truly, truly, I say to you, unless you eat the flesh of the Son of Man and drink his blood, you have no life in you. ⁵⁴ Whoever feeds on my flesh and drinks my blood has eternal life, and I will raise him up on the last day. ⁵⁵ For my flesh is true food, and my blood is true drink. ⁵⁶ Whoever feeds on my flesh and drinks my blood abides in me, and I in him. ⁵⁷ As the living Father sent me, and I live because of the Father, so whoever feeds on me, he also will live because of me. ⁵⁸ This is the bread that came down from heaven, not like the bread the fathers ate, and died. Whoever feeds on this bread will live forever.”

2. The Doctrine: “what is eaten and drunk by us is the proper and natural body and the proper blood, of Christ.”

- a. The sacrament is mysterious: “though the manner surpasses our understanding and cannot be comprehended by us, as the operations of the Holy Spirit are hidden and incomprehensible.”
- b. Faith is necessary: “But the manner of our partaking of the same is not by the mouth, but by the spirit through faith.”
- c. Christ is really, truly present in the experience of partaking of the sacrament by faith: “This feast is a spiritual table, at which Christ communicates Himself with all His benefits to us, and gives us there to enjoy both Himself and the merits of His sufferings and death: nourishing, strengthening, and comforting our poor comfortless souls by the eating of His flesh, quickening and refreshing them by the drinking of His blood.”

3. The Use: The Lord’s Supper...

- a. nourishes us with the body and blood of Christ.
- b. deepens our union with Christ, communicating to us his benefits.
- c. forms us as the body of Christ, deepening our union with each other.
- d. kindles in our children an eagerness to profess their faith as the pathway to taking the place at the table that is rightfully theirs by baptism.
- e. fences us by proclaiming, in the act of table fellowship, the identity of “our people,” the household of faith, the family of the Messiah.
- f. unites us - in the experience of the Christian life - with the story of Israel.
- g. unites us with the universal practice of the Christian church - in old stone buildings in Russia, in house churches in China, in the open air in Uganda - gathered around Word and Sacrament.
- h. seals the promises of God proclaimed in the Word.
- i. reminds us of our dependence upon the grace of God as something that comes from outside of us.
- j. strengthens our faith - our hope, trust, confidence - in the work of Christ for us, as something precisely *for us*.
- k. repeatedly confronts us with the mysteriousness (glorious, incomprehensible, beautiful mysteriousness) of salvation, the world, and God’s fellowship with his people.
- l. repeatedly grounds us in the earthiness of salvation, the world, and God’s fellowship with his people.
- m. causes us to experience the unity of heaven and earth as “we lift up our hearts to the Lord.”
- n. embeds us in a story with a future, forming in us the hope of the marriage supper of the Lamb by giving us a taste and experience of it in the present.
- o. spreads a table before us - a table of joy, delight, celebration - in the presence of our enemies.