

The Eucharist: A Biblical Review

The Eucharist Holds Center Stage

The Eucharist is the focus of Roman Catholic faith. It is the central component of the Mass. It is the sacrament of sacraments. Without question, the Church of Rome regards the doctrine of the Eucharist and Christ's real presence to be of utmost importance. Failure to acknowledge this truth is considered grave sacrilege by Rome. The official Catechism of the Catholic Church leaves no doubt on this point.

The Eucharist is "the source and summit of the Christian life." The other sacraments, and indeed all ecclesiastical ministries and works of the apostolate, are bound up with the Eucharist and oriented toward it.¹

The Sunday Eucharist is the foundation and confirmation of all Christian practice. For this reason the faithful are obliged to participate in the Eucharist.²

Sacrilege is a grave sin especially when committed against the Eucharist, for in this sacrament the true Body of Christ is made substantially present for us.³

Catholic Doctrine

The Catholic Church teaches that once a Catholic priest has consecrated the wafer of bread during Communion, the wafer turns into the literal and real body, blood, soul, and divinity of Jesus Christ.⁴ Therefore, the Communion Host is no longer bread, but Jesus, under the appearance of bread, and is therefore worthy of adoration and worship. The Catholic Catechism states succinctly –

In the most blessed sacrament of the Eucharist "the body and blood, together with the soul and divinity, of our Lord Jesus Christ and, therefore, the whole Christ is truly, really, and substantially contained."⁵

The Church and the world have a great need for Eucharistic worship. Jesus awaits us in this sacrament of love. Let us not refuse the time to go to meet

¹ *Catechism of The Catholic Church*, An Image Book, published by Doubleday, 1994, para. 1324, page 368.

² *Ibid.*, para. 2181, page 583.

³ *Ibid.*, para. 2120, page 570.

⁴ This process is called transubstantiation and is described in the Catechism of the Catholic Church, paragraphs 1373-1377 and 1413, on pages 383-385 and page 395.

⁵ *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, para. 1374, page 383.

him in adoration, in contemplation full of faith, and open to making amends for the serious offenses and crimes of the world. Let our adoration never cease.⁶

Because Christ himself is present in the sacrament of the altar, he is to be honored with the worship of adoration.⁷

What Does the Bible Teach?

We have documented what the Roman Catholic Church teaches concerning the Eucharist. But what does the Bible teach? The Bible encourages believers to study the “whole counsel”⁸ of God’s Word and to “test all things; hold fast what is good” (1 Thessalonians 5:21). Every believer is to “be diligent to present yourself approved to God, a worker who does not need to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth” (2 Timothy 2:15). To obey God’s command to test all things, we will search the Scriptures to determine what the Bible teaches concerning the Lord’s Supper.

The Last Supper was celebrated by first century Christians in obedience to Jesus’ words “do this in remembrance of Me” (Luke 22:19). This observance was established by the Lord at the Last Supper when He symbolically offered Himself as the Paschal Lamb of atonement. His actual death the next day fulfilled the prophecy. Only Paul uses the phrase *Lord’s Supper*⁹ although it is alluded to in Revelation 19:9, where we are told that believers will celebrate the “marriage supper of the Lamb.” Church fathers began to call the occasion the *Eucharist* meaning *thanksgiving* from the blessing pronounced over the bread and wine after about A.D. 100. Christians have celebrated the Lord’s Supper regularly as a sign of the new covenant sealed by Christ’s death and resurrection.¹⁰ Today, the Eucharist means far more than simply thanksgiving.

This is My Body

So what exactly did Jesus ordain during the Last Supper? Here is the Bible’s description of the events surrounding the Lord’s Supper. At the Last Supper “[Jesus] took bread, gave thanks and broke it, and gave it to them, saying, ‘This is My body which is given for you; do this in remembrance of Me.’ Likewise He also took the cup after supper, saying, ‘This cup is the new covenant in My blood, which is shed for you’” (Luke 22: 19, 20).

Furthermore, proponents of the Catholic Eucharist point to Jesus’ words recorded in the sixth chapter of John’s Gospel. Though this chapter does not deal with the Last Supper, Jesus’ words certainly appear to relate to the Communion meal:

“I am the living bread which came down from heaven. If anyone eats of this bread, he will live forever; and the bread that I shall give is My flesh, which I shall give for the life of the world.” The Jews therefore quarreled among

⁶ Ibid., para. 1380, pages 385, 386.

⁷ Ibid., para. 1418, pages 395.

⁸ Acts 20:27

⁹ 1 Corinthians 11:20

¹⁰ Holman Bible Dictionary, Parsons Technology, 1994.

themselves, saying, "How can this Man give us His flesh to eat?" Then Jesus said to them, "Most assuredly, I say to you, unless you eat the flesh of the Son of Man and drink His blood, you have no life in you. Whoever eats My flesh and drinks My blood has eternal life, and I will raise him up at the last day. For My flesh is food indeed, and My blood is drink indeed." (John 6:51-55).

We will now examine the Word of God to understand the context and meaning of the Scriptures that pertain to Communion.¹¹

Metaphors and Similes

Throughout the Bible, context determines meaning. Bible-believing Christians know to take the Bible literally unless the context demands a figurative or symbolic interpretation. Before exploring Jesus' words in John chapter 6 and elsewhere, let's review a few examples of symbolism in the Scriptures. All scholars would agree that the following verses are metaphorical. An explanation follows each verse.

Oh, taste and see that the LORD is good (Psalm 34:8).

(Try and experience God's promises to find if they are true.)

"Whoever drinks of the water that I shall give him will never thirst. But the water that I shall give him will become in him a fountain of water springing up into everlasting life" (John 4:14).

(For those who receive the gift of salvation, Christ's Spirit shall dwell in their souls assuring them of everlasting life.)

Moreover He said to me, "Son of man, eat what you find; eat this scroll, and go, speak to the house of Israel." So I opened my mouth, and He caused me to eat that scroll (Ezekiel 3:1, 2).

(Receive into your heart, internalize, and obey God's Word.)

At one point Jesus said, "Destroy this temple, and in three days I will raise it up."¹² The Jews thought He spoke of the literal temple in Jerusalem, but if we keep reading we find that Jesus was referring to His body.¹³ On another occasion, Jesus said, "I am the true vine."¹⁴ Of course we know that Jesus did not mean that He was a literal grape vine twisting around a post. When the Bible says God hides us under His wings,¹⁵ we know that God is not a bird with feathers. God is the source of all life and our provider and protector, and these figures vividly illustrate this.

Throughout the Bible, figurative language is used to compare one thing to another so that the listeners can easily visualize and understand. It is apparent from searching the entire council of God that the Lord often uses metaphors to paint images for the reader. In fact the Bible tells us that Jesus regularly used parables to

¹¹ Scriptural instructions concerning Communion can be found in the following verses: Matthew 26:17-35; Mark 14:12-31; Luke 22:7-23; John 13:1-17, 26 and 1 Corinthians 11:17-34.

¹² John 2:19

¹³ John 2:20-21

¹⁴ John 15:1

¹⁵ Psalm 91:4

figuratively describe one thing as something else.¹⁶ Jesus Himself stated, “These things I have spoken to you in figurative language...” (John 16:25). However, the Bible should always be interpreted literally unless the context demands a symbolic explanation. So what does the context of John’s Gospel and the other Gospels demand?

John Chapter 6

If we read the entire sixth chapter of John’s Gospel, we not only get the context, but also some startling insights into what Jesus meant when He said we must eat His flesh and drink His blood. John chapter 6, begins with the account of Jesus feeding five thousand, followed by the account of Jesus walking on water. Starting in verse 22, we find that on the following day, people were seeking Jesus for the wrong reasons, which we understand from Jesus’ words in verses 26 and 27: “You seek Me, not because you saw the signs, but because you ate of the loaves and were filled. Do not labor for food which perishes, but for food which endures to everlasting life.”

These verses begin to frame the context of the verses that follow, specifically, that Jesus emphasized the need for them to seek eternal life. Jesus goes on to explain to them how to obtain eternal life. And in verse 28, when the people ask Jesus “What shall we do, that we may work the works of God?” Jesus replies (verse 29), “This is the work of God, that you believe in Him whom He sent.”

Here Jesus specifies that there is only one work that pleases God, namely, belief in Jesus. Jesus re-emphasizes this in verse 35. “I am the bread of life. He who comes to Me shall never hunger, and he who believes in Me shall never thirst.” Notice the imperative is to “come to Me” and “believe in Me.” Jesus repeats the thrust of His message in verse 40 where He states—“And this is the will of Him who sent Me, that everyone who sees the Son and believes in Him may have everlasting life; and I will raise him up at the last day.”

The Bread of Life

Jesus could not be clearer—by coming to Him and trusting in Him we will receive eternal life. At this point in the narrative, the Jews complained about Him because He said: “I am the bread which came down from heaven” (verse 41). Jesus responds to their murmuring in verses 42 through 58, where He states that He is indeed the “living bread” and that they must eat His flesh and drink His blood to obtain eternal life. However, let’s remember the context of this statement. First, Jesus contrasts Himself with the manna that rained down on their fathers and sustained them for their journey. But their fathers have since died. But Jesus now offers Himself as the living bread, causing those who eat of Him to live forever.

Jesus is not the perishable manna that their ancestors ate in the wilderness, He is the eternal bread of life that lives forever. Only by partaking in His everlasting life can we hope to live with Him forever. This contrast strengthens His main message, which is recorded in verse 47 where Jesus says, “Most assuredly, I say to you, he who believes in Me has everlasting life.” Notice, Jesus said that as soon as we believe in Him we have—present tense—eternal life. It is not something we aim at or hope

¹⁶ Matthew 13:34

we might attain in the future, but rather, something we receive immediately upon believing.

When Jesus said these words, He was in the synagogue in Capernaum (verse 59), and He had neither bread nor wine. Therefore Jesus was either commanding cannibalism or He was speaking figuratively. If He was speaking literally, then He would be directly contradicting God the Father: **“You shall not eat flesh with its life, that is, its blood”** (Genesis 9:4). Therefore, because Jesus Himself said, **“The Scripture cannot be broken”** (John 10:35), He must be speaking metaphorically. And that is exactly how He explains His own words in the subsequent verses.

The Flesh Profits Nothing

After this, in verse 60, we find that many of His disciples said—“This is a hard saying; who can understand it?” Jesus was aware of their complaints and He responded in verses 61 through 64 saying—“Does this offend you? What then if you should see the Son of Man ascend where He was before? **It is the Spirit who gives life; the flesh profits nothing. The words that I speak to you are spirit, and they are life.** But there are some of you who do not believe.” Wait a minute, the flesh profits nothing! I thought Jesus said we must eat His flesh? Yet, if the flesh profits nothing, Jesus must be speaking in spiritual terms. And that is exactly what He says—“The words that I speak to you are spirit.”

Jesus uses the exact same Greek word for flesh (*sarx*) as He did in the preceding verses. Therefore we must conclude that eating His literal flesh profits nothing! If the Lord Himself sets the context of the dialogue, we would do well to hear Him. He said that the words that He speaks are spirit and that the flesh profits nothing.

If that isn't clear enough, Peter's words allow no room for doubt. Immediately following the dialogue with the Jews, in which some disciples went away, Jesus said to the twelve apostles, “Do you also want to go away?” (verse 67). Peter's response is profound. His reply to Jesus is recorded in verse 68. “Lord, to whom shall we go? You have the words of eternal life. Also we have come to believe and know that You are the Christ, the Son of the living God.” Amazing! Peter did not say we have come to believe that we must eat Your flesh to live. He said that we know You are the Christ, and we have come to believe in You as the Christ. This is the confession of faith that leads to eternal life, not eating Jesus' flesh and drinking His blood. It also agrees with the totality of Scripture. Here is a brief sampling:

If you confess with your mouth the Lord Jesus and believe in your heart that God has raised Him from the dead, you will be saved (Romans 10:9).

What must I do to be saved?...Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and you will be saved (Acts 16:30, 31).

He who believes in the Son has everlasting life (John 3:36).

Spiritual Sense

In John chapter 6, Jesus clearly contrasted the temporary benefits of the physical manna with the eternal benefits of life in the Spirit. This theme is repeated throughout the Word of God. All through the Bible, the limited and temporary benefits of the flesh are contrasted with the infinite and eternal benefits of the Spirit.

Consuming manna, even manna from heaven, has limited value. However, receiving Christ's life, by placing our trust and hope in Him, has infinite value. Romans chapter 8 explains this truth:

There is therefore now no condemnation to those who are in Christ Jesus, who do not walk according to the flesh, but according to the Spirit. ...For those who live according to the flesh set their minds on the things of the flesh, but those who live according to the Spirit, the things of the Spirit. For to be carnally minded is death, but to be spiritually minded is life and peace. ...So then, those who are in the flesh cannot please God. But you are not in the flesh but in the Spirit, if indeed the Spirit of God dwells in you. Now if anyone does not have the Spirit of Christ, he is not His (Romans 8:1, 5, 6, 8, 9).

Jesus' Seven "I AM" Statements

In addition to Jesus' teaching in John chapter 6, we get additional insight into His message by reading John's entire Gospel, and we begin to fully understand what Jesus meant when He said "I am the bread of life." In John's Gospel, Jesus makes seven "I am" statements. These seven are listed below.

John 6:35	I am the bread of life
John 8:12	I am the light of the world
John 10:9	I am the door
John 10:11	I am the good shepherd
John 11:25	I am the resurrection and the life
John 14:6	I am the way, the truth, and the life
John 15:5	I am the vine

Believers should love these seven "I am" statements. Not only is Jesus claiming to be God, but He is defining who God is. Back in the Book of Exodus, Moses asks God what His name is. ¹⁷ God responds to Moses by saying, "My name is I AM." God is the self-existent One. This I AM in the Hebrew is the name of God, the YHWH where we get "Yahweh" and "Jehovah".

And in John's Gospel, Jesus expounds and explains who God is. If your soul is hungering, Jesus would say: I am the bread of life. If you're seeking illumination and understanding, Jesus would say: I am the light of the world. Are you looking for the entrance into abundant life? Jesus would say: I am the door. Do you need guidance and protection? Jesus would say: I am the good shepherd. Are you seeking eternal life? Jesus would say: I am the resurrection and the life. Jesus knows your needs better than you do. Whatever your need, Jesus would say: I am the way, the truth, and the life. I am the vine. If you abide in Me, I will supply all your needs.

What Jesus is saying in John chapter 6 and throughout the Gospel of John is: I am all you need. I created you and I know and understand what you need to be fully satisfied and it is Me. Jesus is our all in all. No matter what we think we need, Jesus, alone can supply our true need. By studying the entire Gospel of John, we see clearly that Jesus is not proclaiming Himself to be literal bread, any more than He is proclaiming Himself to be a literal vine or a wooden door. Rather, He is affirming

¹⁷ Exodus 3:11-15

that as our God and Creator, He, and He alone, is all we need. Understanding the whole counsel of God is crucial.

John Chapter 6: Unrelated to the Last Supper

Before leaving chapter 6 of John's Gospel, we must realize that this chapter does not deal directly with the Last Supper, or with the doctrine of the Eucharist. That's worth repeating. John chapter 6 has nothing to do with the Last Supper! Remember, Jesus had neither bread nor wine in this narrative. He never even mentions wine and there is no altar either. And while proponents of transubstantiation often refer to these verses to support their doctrine, nowhere in this chapter does Jesus give the disciples instruction on how to celebrate Communion, nor is the Last Supper described here. Therefore we must acknowledge that this is a separate event.

John deals with the Last Supper starting in chapter 13, but chapter 6 is a separate subject. In chapter 6, Jesus never even alludes to a procedure to follow concerning the Communion meal, nor does He tell His disciples to institute a priesthood that will consecrate bread and turn it into His literal flesh. Nor does He teach here or anywhere in the Bible, to worship His body and blood under the appearance of bread.

John Chapter 13

In the thirteenth chapter of John's Gospel, the events of the Last Supper are given. In verses 2 and 4 we read— "And supper being ended...[Jesus] rose from supper and laid aside His garments, took a towel and girded Himself." So we see that by this time in John's account Jesus had already blessed the bread, broke it and said, "This is My body which is given for you" (Luke 22:19).

What is interesting in John's account of the Last Supper, is that after Jesus blessed the bread and said, "This is My body," He referred to the blessed and consecrated bread as mere bread. Verse 26 states: "Jesus answered, 'It is he whom I shall give a piece of bread when I have dipped it.' And having dipped the bread, He gave it to Judas Iscariot, the son of Simon." Did Jesus lose track of what He was doing? Did He misspeak? No. According to Jesus' own words, the bread remained bread even after being blessed.

In fact, John chapter 13 mentions bread five times. In each case, the blessed bread is referred to as plain bread.¹⁸ For instance, in verse 27 we read— "Now after the piece of bread, Satan entered him [Judas]." The Word of God tells us that Satan entered Judas right after receiving the bread. There is no indication that John believed in or taught transubstantiation.

Matthew, Mark and Luke

Matthew 26:17-29, Mark 14:12-25, and Luke 22:7-23 give parallel accounts of what took place on the night before Jesus was crucified. In Luke 22:15-19 Jesus said to His disciples:

¹⁸ John 13:18, 26, 27, 30

“With fervent desire I have desired to eat this Passover with you before I suffer; for I say to you, I will no longer eat of it until it is fulfilled in the kingdom of God.” Then He took the cup, and gave thanks, and said, “Take this and divide it among yourselves; for I say to you, I will not drink of the fruit of the vine until the kingdom of God comes.” And He took bread, gave thanks and broke it, and gave it to them, saying, “This is My body which is given for you; do this in remembrance of Me.”

Previously, we’ve given several examples showing that God often uses figurative language to describe Himself and to illustrate a spiritual truth. There are many biblical reasons why Jesus’ words at the Last Supper were meant to be taken figuratively. The remainder of this chapter will examine why.

The Passover Lamb

Exodus chapters 12 and 13 describe the events of the original Passover. Each year the Jews were to observe the Passover as a memorial of their deliverance out of bondage. On this night a lamb without blemish was slain and its blood applied to the door posts and lintel of each believer’s house. The blood of the lamb covered those who trusted in the Lord. All who applied the lamb’s blood would be spared, while those who ignored God’s warning would be destroyed.

The Scriptures clearly explain that “For indeed Christ, our Passover, was sacrificed for us” (1 Corinthians 5:7). When John the Baptist first saw Jesus he proclaimed: “Behold! The Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world!” (John 1:29). Jesus fulfilled each and every Old Testament type that pointed to the coming Messiah. This included the Passover Lamb. During the Last Supper, Jesus was declaring that He Himself would become our substitutionary lamb. He would die in our place. All who repented of their sins and placed their trust in Him would be delivered from the bondage of sin and death.

Of course during the Last Supper Jesus did not become a literal lamb, nor did the bread become His literal body. To the Jewish believers in attendance it would have been clear that Jesus Himself was to be the sacrifice for their sins. Jesus would fulfill the Jewish prophecy that the Messiah would bear our sins in His own body (Isaiah 53:5-12; 1 Peter 2:24). It would be His body that would be killed and His blood that would be shed for our sins. The Old Testament sacrifices and offerings—which foreshadowed Christ—would be fulfilled in the Son of God. No longer would there be any need to offer sacrifices for our sins. God Himself would once and for all atone for all sins. This is what Jesus meant when He referred to the Passover elements as His body and blood.

The next day His body was indeed broken and His blood was poured out for the sins of the world. His command to believers is “do this in remembrance of Me.” Celebrating Communion is therefore a memorial, not a re-sacrificing of Jesus. At the Last Supper Jesus did not institute a priesthood. He in no way ordained transubstantiation. And He definitely did not condone an ongoing sacrificial system. No, the good news is that:

For by one offering He has perfected forever those who are being sanctified...there is no longer an offering for sin (Hebrews 10:14, 18).

As the Jews celebrated Passover in remembrance of their deliverance from the bondage of slavery, we celebrate the Lord's Supper in remembrance of our deliverance from the bondage of sin. Jesus is our Passover Lamb, though He is not a literal lamb.

Jesus' One Body is in Heaven

We are told in Mark 16:19 that "[Jesus] was received up into heaven, and sat down at the right hand of God." Jesus ascended bodily to be at the right hand of the Father. Peter says it this way: "[Jesus] has gone into heaven and is at the right hand of God" (1 Peter 3:22). Jesus' one and only glorified body is in heaven. This makes sense when we remember that He said, "Do this in remembrance of Me." If Jesus' body, blood, soul and divinity is with us in the Eucharist, the words "do this in remembrance of Me" would make no sense. A memorial service is not held for someone who is in attendance, but rather for someone who has departed.

Now, of course, Jesus is God and "God is Spirit, and those who worship Him must worship in spirit and truth" (John 4:24). Jesus is with us spiritually and He is omnipresent (present everywhere), so He is with all of us right now—wherever we may be. But His glorified body is in heaven. "After He [Jesus] had offered one sacrifice for sins forever, sat down at the right hand of God, from that time waiting till His enemies are made His footstool. For by one offering He has perfected forever those who are being sanctified" (Hebrews 10:12-14). It is clear that Jesus' body is in heaven and we are to remember what He did for us on the cross by celebrating Communion.

The Acts of the Early Church

The early church celebrated Communion frequently and their actions are recorded in the Book of Acts. Let's look at how the apostles and disciples celebrated Communion after Jesus' ascension. In the Book of Acts we read:

And they continued steadfastly in the apostles' doctrine and fellowship, and breaking of bread, and in prayers (Acts 2:42).

So continuing daily with one accord in the temple, and breaking bread from house to house, they ate their food with gladness (Acts 2:46).

And when he [Paul] had said these things, he took bread and gave thanks to God in the presence of them all; and when he had broken it he began to eat. Then they were all encouraged, and also took food themselves (Acts 27:35, 36).

The Lord's apostles, the very same ones that were present at the Last Supper, broke bread daily, celebrating Communion, and not once did they refer to the bread as the literal body, blood, soul and divinity of Jesus. Even on Sunday, which is the day that the Lord rose, they referred to Communion as mere bread. In a key verse in the Book of Acts, we read: "Now on the first day of the week, when the disciples came together to break bread..." (Acts 20:7).

Notice that the disciples broke bread on Sunday in remembrance of Jesus' death and resurrection. Search as we might, there is no hint in the entire Book of Acts that

the disciples considered the Communion service as anything but a memorial service. This does not lessen its importance, rather it emphasizes that the reason for the Communion celebration is to remember the completed work of the cross and that Jesus is now in heaven as our triumphant King!

God Does Not Dwell in Temples Made with Hands

What is interesting in the Book of Acts is the repeated, emphatic statement made by the disciples that God does not dwell in temples! **“However, the Most High does not dwell in temples made with hands...”** (Acts 7:48).

[Paul said] Men of Athens, I perceive that in all things you are very religious; for as I was passing through and considering the objects of your worship, I even found an altar with this inscription: TO THE UNKNOWN GOD. Therefore, the One whom you worship without knowing, Him I proclaim to you: God, who made the world and everything in it, since He is Lord of heaven and earth, does not dwell in temples made with hands. Nor is He worshiped with men’s hands, as though He needed anything (Acts 17:22-25).

This truth is also echoed in the Book of Hebrews: “For Christ has not entered the holy places made with hands...but into heaven itself, now to appear in the presence of God for us” (Hebrews 9:24).

The Eucharistic tabernacle is a “holy place” made with human hands! Yet, the Bible states that Christ is not there but in heaven. In addition, the Greek word for *temple* is *naos*, which can also be translated as *shrine* or a place of worship. God says He doesn’t dwell there, yet the Catholic Church insists that Jesus is present in all the Eucharistic tabernacles of the world. The Communion Host is made with men’s hands, yet, the Bible states that God is NOT worshipped with men’s hands (Acts 17:25).

Abstain from Blood

Furthermore, the apostles also commanded believers to abstain from blood. In the Book of Acts, we find that the apostles and elders came together to consider certain Jewish customs that had crept into the early church. Their decision, stated by James, is as follows:

Therefore, I judge that we should not trouble those from among the Gentiles who are turning to God, but that we write to them to abstain from things polluted by idols, from sexual immorality, from things strangled, and from blood (Acts 15:19, 20).

If the original apostles and disciples repeatedly commanded new believers to abstain from blood (see also Acts 15:29; 21:25), why does the Roman Catholic Church encourage followers to eat Jesus’ body and blood? If the consecrated Communion Host becomes Jesus literal body, BLOOD, soul, and divinity, then partaking in Communion goes against the Holy Spirit’s command to abstain from blood. This is a direct contradiction.

From the very beginning, God commanded mankind to abstain from blood—“But you shall not eat flesh with its life, that is, its blood” (Genesis 9:4). Moses

reiterated this command, “No one among you shall eat blood, nor shall any stranger who dwells among you eat blood” (Leviticus 17:12). “You shall not eat anything with the blood, nor shall you practice divination or soothsaying” (Leviticus 19:26). The prophets repeated God’s command “...do not sin against the LORD by eating with the blood” (1 Samuel 14:34).

In the Book of Acts, the Jewish disciples were confirming what God—who cannot lie and does not change—commanded in the Old Testament. Therefore, only a figurative interpretation of the Last Supper is in harmony with the whole counsel of God.

First Corinthians 11

Some proponents of the Eucharist argue that First Corinthians 11 supports transubstantiation. They refer to verse 29 that states: “For he who eats and drinks in an unworthy manner eats and drinks judgment to himself, not discerning the Lord’s body.” A thorough read of First Corinthians 11, reveals that the Corinthians were not making the proper distinction between Communion and common meals. Not discerning the Lord’s body meant not discerning in the bread and wine the symbols of Christ’s body and blood, but partaking of them irreverently, as if it were a common feast.

It is evident that this was the leading offense of the Corinthians. Those who were eating and drinking in an unworthy manner were getting drunk and selfishly eating before others in the body of Christ. Paul states this as the problem in verses 20 and 21. There is no indication that the apostle Paul believed in or taught transubstantiation.

In fact, Paul repeatedly refers to the blessed bread as normal bread after it had been blessed.¹⁹ Paul states in verse 26—“For as often as you eat this bread and drink this cup, you proclaim the Lord’s death till He comes.”

Notice also that Paul explains that we are to celebrate the Lord’s Supper “till He comes”. The words “till He comes” pre-supposes that the Lord has ascended on high.²⁰ Therefore the Lord’s Supper is in remembrance of His death and resurrection *until He returns*. This agrees with what Jesus ordained when He said, “Do this in remembrance of Me” (Luke 22:19).

Finally, it is apparent that First Corinthians 11 uses figurative language to describe Communion. The cup is referred to figuratively: “This cup is the new covenant in My blood...” (1 Corinthians 11:25). Of course the cup was not the actual covenant but symbolic of it. “For as often as you eat this bread and drink this cup, you proclaim the Lord’s death till He comes.” (1 Corinthians 11:26). Surely we are not to drink the cup. This is a figurative reference to the wine inside the cup.

Finished Work

Perhaps the most disturbing aspects of this Catholic doctrine is that Christ’s sacrifice is perpetuated thousands of times daily by Catholic priests all over the globe, and that by receiving the Eucharist a Catholic can obtain forgiveness of sins.

¹⁹ 1 Corinthians 11:26-28

²⁰ 1 Peter 3:21, 22; Matthew 26:64; Romans 8:34; Ephesians 1:20; Colossians 3:1; Hebrews 1:3; 9:24, 25; 12:2. Many Scripture verses state that Jesus’ one and only body is in heaven.

In other words, the Catholic Church teaches that the Eucharist is a sacrificial offering able to atone for sins. Therefore, Christ is ever suffering and dying each time a priest consecrates the wafer.

This Catholic belief is vividly represented by the crucifix which is placed on every altar during Mass. The crucifix portrays an emaciated Christ suffering and dying on the cross. *The Catholic Encyclopedia* explains its purpose: "The crucifix is the principal ornament of the altar. It is placed on the altar to recall to the mind of the celebrant, and the people, that **the Victim offered on the altar is the same as was offered on the Cross**. For this reason the crucifix must be placed on the altar as often as Mass is celebrated" (Constit., Accepimus of Benedict XIV, 16 July, 1746).

Here is how the Catechism explains this on-going sacrifice:

As sacrifice, the Eucharist is also offered in reparation for the sins of the living and the dead and to obtain spiritual or temporal benefits from God. ²¹

Every time this mystery is celebrated, "the work of our redemption is carried on." ²²

The Eucharist is thus a sacrifice because it *re-presents* (makes present) the sacrifice of the cross. ²³

Both the Council of Trent and Vatican II state that Christ is "immolated" in the Sacrifice of the Mass. According to *Webster's Dictionary*, the word "immolate" means: "to offer in sacrifice; *esp* : to kill as a sacrificial victim." Vatican II quotes Pope Paul VI's Encyclical on the Holy Eucharist where he writes:

The Lord is immolated in an unbloody way in the Sacrifice of the Mass and He re-presents the sacrifice of the Cross and applies its salvific power at the moment when he becomes sacramentally present. ²⁴

This teaching directly contradicts the Word of God. When Jesus died on the cross He proclaimed: "It is finished!" (John 19:30). The Greek word used is *tetelestai*. It was a Greek accounting term that meant "paid in full". The work for our salvation is complete! Christ purchased our redemption once and for all on the cross. Jesus is not being perpetually sacrificed in the Eucharist as the Catholic Church teaches. Partaking in the Eucharist does not appease God, nor does it atone for sin. If you are a Catholic, then the following verses can be transforming and revolutionary if you will simply take God at His word.

For Christ has not entered the holy places made with hands, which are copies of the true, but into heaven itself, now to appear in the presence of God for us; not that He should offer Himself often, as the high priest enters the Most Holy Place every year with blood of another—He then would have had to suffer often since the foundation of the world; but now, once at the end of the ages, He has appeared to put away sin by the sacrifice of Himself. And as it is

²¹ Catechism of the Catholic Church, para. 1414, page 395.

²² *Ibid.*, para. 1405, page 393.

²³ *Ibid.*, para. 1366, page 380.

²⁴ *Mysterium Fidei*, "Encyclical of Pope Paul VI on the Holy Eucharist," September 3, 1965. On-line posting: www.vatican.va cited June 17, 2005.

appointed for men to die once, but after this the judgment, **so Christ was offered once to bear the sins of many**. To those who eagerly wait for Him He will appear a second time, apart from sin, for salvation (Hebrews 9:24-28).

And every priest stands ministering daily and offering repeatedly the same sacrifices, which can never take away sins. But this Man, after He had offered one sacrifice for sins forever, sat down at the right hand of God, from that time waiting till His enemies are made His footstool. For by one offering He has perfected forever those who are being sanctified. ...**there is no longer an offering for sin** (Hebrews 10:11-14, 18).

Knowing that Christ, having been raised from the dead, dies no more. Death no longer has dominion over Him. For the death that He died, He died to sin once for all; but the life that He lives, He lives to God (Romans 6:9-10).

For Christ also suffered once for sins, the just for the unjust, that He might bring us to God, being put to death in the flesh but made alive by the Spirit (1 Peter 3:18).

Incarnation, Ascension, Second Coming

There are many other Scriptures that refute transubstantiation. For example, transubstantiation contradicts the biblical doctrine of the incarnation and ascension. The Bible tells us that Jesus had one, and only one, body prepared for Him by the Father, "a body you have prepared for Me" (Hebrews 10:5). "Inasmuch then as the children have partaken of flesh and blood, He Himself likewise shared in the same, that through death He might destroy him who had the power of death, that is, the devil" (Hebrews 2:14).

Furthermore the Scriptures tell us clearly that Jesus' one and only glorified body is in heaven: "Jesus Christ...has gone into heaven and is at the right hand of God..." (1 Peter 3:21, 22). "If then you were raised with Christ, seek those things which are above, where Christ is, sitting at the right hand of God" (Colossians 3:1). "[Jesus] who descended is also the One who ascended far above all the heavens..." (Ephesians 4:10). There are many, many verses that reiterate that Jesus' one body is in heaven. ²⁵ If Jesus' only body is in heaven, then it is not in thousands of tabernacles around the world.

Transubstantiation also contradicts the Bible's teaching concerning the Second Coming of Christ. Many Catholics who believe that Jesus Christ will physically and visibly return to earth also believe that Christ will come back first in His "Eucharistic form". ²⁶ However, once again the Bible clearly refutes this notion:

Now when He had spoken these things, while they watched, He was taken up, and a cloud received Him out of their sight. And while they looked steadfastly toward heaven as He went up, behold, two men stood by them in white apparel, who also said, "Men of Galilee, why do you stand gazing up into heaven? This same Jesus, who was taken up from you into heaven, will so come in like manner as you saw Him go into heaven." (Acts 1:9-11).

²⁵ Matthew 26:64; Mark 14:62; 16:19; Luke 22:69; Acts 2:33; 7:55-56; Romans 8:34; Ephesians 1:20; 2:16; Colossians 3:1; Hebrews 1:3; 8:1; 9:24, 25; 10:12; 12:2; 1 Peter 3:22.

²⁶ Refer to chapter 11, "The Eucharistic Reign of Christ."

Then they will see the Son of Man coming in the clouds with great power and glory (Mark 13:26).

Behold, He is coming with clouds, and every eye will see Him, even they who pierced Him (Revelation 1:7).

Behold, the Lord comes with ten thousands of His saints, to execute judgment on all... (Jude 1:14-15).

Jesus ascended bodily and He will return in His glorified body—not in the form of a wafer. Furthermore, the Bible never ascribes more than one location to His physical body at any given time—neither should we. When Jesus returns in His glorified body every eye will see Him. Transubstantiation is therefore unbiblical.

In the final book of the Bible, Christ's Second Coming is described and confirmed as follows:

Now I saw heaven opened, and behold, a white horse. And He who sat on him was called Faithful and True, and in righteousness He judges and makes war. His eyes were like a flame of fire, and on His head were many crowns. He had a name written that no one knew except Himself. He was clothed with a robe dipped in blood, and His name is called The Word of God. And the armies in heaven, clothed in fine linen, white and clean, followed Him on white horses (Revelation 19:11-14).

Mystery and Miracles

The Catholic Church refers to the Mass as a mystery. However, the Bible never refers to Communion as a mystery, nor should we. Remember the warning in Scripture not to corrupt the pure and simple truth of the gospel: "But I fear, lest somehow, as the serpent deceived Eve by his craftiness, so your minds may be corrupted from the simplicity that is in Christ" (2 Corinthians 11:3).

When the priest consecrates the Host nothing happens. The bread still looks like bread, feels like bread, smells like bread, and tastes like bread. There is not a single miracle in the Bible where all outward evidences reveal that nothing happened. Biblical miracles are always tangible and practical. Moses really parted the Red Sea—he didn't ask the people to cross before parting it. Elijah actually called down literal fire to the horror of the false prophets. Jesus literally healed the sick, cleansed the lepers, and raised the dead. God has never dealt with mankind using virtual "miracles".

Some may point to reports of Eucharistic miracles as evidence that the consecrated Host is the literal body and blood of Christ. However, the Bible warns of just such a deception occurring in the last days:

For false christs and false prophets will rise and show great signs and wonders to deceive, if possible, even the elect. "See, I have told you beforehand. "Therefore if they say to you, 'Look, He is in the desert!' do not go out; or 'Look, He is in the inner rooms!' do not believe it." (Matthew 24:24-26).

The Eucharistic Jesus is a false christ whom many false prophets claim is in the inner rooms of thousands of Catholic churches. Furthermore, as we shall document, many lying signs and wonders are accompanying Eucharistic exposition and adoration. Not surprisingly, the Bible reveals that these tangible Eucharistic miracles have a demonic origin.

The “Unbloody” Sacrifice

The Catholic Church teaches that the Eucharist is an “unbloody sacrifice” in which Christ is actually “immolated” or offered as the victim. In fact the term “Host” is derived from the Latin word for victim. Therefore the offering of the Host is the perpetuation of the sacrifice of Christ in an unbloody manner to make satisfaction for sins. Yet the Bible states succinctly that there is no forgiveness of sins without the shedding of blood:

...without shedding of blood there is no remission (Hebrews 9:22).

For the life of the flesh is in the blood, and I have given it to you upon the altar to make atonement for your souls; for it is the blood that makes atonement for the soul (Leviticus 17:11).

Furthermore, at the Last Supper the Lord took bread and wine at a table, not an altar. Tables are for eating, altars are for sacrificing. In the Bible, sacrifices were made on an altar. In fact, God commanded His people that there was to be only one place and one altar for sacrifice.²⁷ This foreshadowed Christ’s single offering for sins on Calvary’s cross. Historically, during those periods when the Israelites rebelled against God, we find that they multiplied altars for sacrifice just as the heathen did.²⁸ Despite these clear biblical warnings, today there are thousands and thousands of Catholic altars where Christ is purportedly sacrificed.

Eternal Consequences

Clearly, the Catholic doctrine of the Eucharist is contrary to God’s Word. But just how serious is this doctrinal error? Is it serious enough to determine one’s eternal destiny? Ironically, the following quote from former Protestant Peter Kreeft, now a strong proponent of the Catholic Eucharist, accurately expresses the significance and consequence of submitting to this belief:

What a point of division the Eucharist is! One of the two sides is very, very wrong. I said before that if Protestants are right, Catholics are making the terrible mistake of idolatrously adoring bread and wine as God. But if Catholics are right, Protestants are making the just-as-terrible mistake of refusing to adore Christ where He is and are missing out on the most ontologically real union with Christ that is possible in this life, in Holy Communion.²⁹

²⁷ Deuteronomy 12:1-32; Exodus 20:24-26; Leviticus 17:1-12; Joshua 22:16; Joshua 22:29

²⁸ 1 Kings 12:28-31; 1 Kings 13:32; 1 Kings 11:1-10; 2 Chronicles 14:1-5; 2 Chronicles 33:1-5

²⁹ Peter Kreeft, *Ecumenical Jihad*, Ignatius Press, San Francisco, 1994, pages 159, 160.

Consider the repercussions of what Kreeft has written. If Catholics are wrong in their belief in and worship of the Eucharist, then they are guilty of idolatry. Therefore, they are directly violating the first and second commandments (Exodus 20:3-5).

It is imperative that we believe in and direct all worship toward the true Jesus of the Bible. Jesus warned that there would be many false christs. That being the case, shouldn't all professing Christians search the Scriptures diligently to determine the truth? This is God's desire. "And you will seek Me and find Me, when you search for Me with all your heart" (Jeremiah 29:13). "Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word of God" (Luke 4:4). "Sanctify them by Your truth. Your word is truth" (John 17:17).

Addendum: Inconsistent Catholic Teaching

John chapter 6	John chapter 4
Jesus focuses on the crowd's interest in bread to teach about eternal life.	Jesus focuses on a woman's interest in water to teach about eternal life.
Jesus uses the metaphor of consumption to illustrate belief in Him - "he who believes in Me shall never hunger or thirst" (v. 35).	Jesus uses the metaphor of consumption to illustrate belief in Him - "whoever drinks of the water that I shall give him will never thirst" (v.14)
Jesus uses the same metaphor to describe eternal life - "everyone who sees [eats] the Son and believes [drinks] in Him may have everlasting life" (compare v. 40 with v. 54).	Jesus uses the same metaphor to describe eternal life - "the water that I shall give him will become in him a fountain of water springing up into everlasting life" (v. 14).
Many in the crowd take the metaphor literally, hoping for another free lunch to satisfy their physical hunger. Apparently many were more interested in physical food than spiritual life. Jesus explains what His metaphor means: "It is the Spirit who gives life; the flesh profits nothing. The words that I speak to you are spirit, and they are life" (v. 60-64).	The woman takes the metaphor literally hoping she would not have to return to draw any more water. Jesus makes no attempt to clear up the woman's confusion (v. 15).
Unbelievers who fail to understand depart while the believers who desire spiritual nourishment remain (v. 68-69).	Instead Jesus focuses on her real spiritual need for repentance, conversion and forgiveness (v. 16-26).

Summary: The Roman Catholic Church displays its inconsistent teaching by taking the words of Jesus literally in John 6 but not in John 4. If we must eat

Jesus' literal flesh and blood for eternal life, why do we not have to drink His literal water for eternal life?

Clearly Jesus used a metaphor in both chapters 4 and 6 to teach a spiritual lesson.

"These things I have spoken to you in figurative language; but the time is coming when I will no longer speak to you in figurative language, but I will tell you plainly about the Father" (John 16:25).