



**WIN Program: Witnessing in Neighborhoods
Advanced Class on Catholicism**

Week Eight

Transubstantiation and the Real Presence

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Transubstantiation and the Real Presence

By [Matt Slick](#)

Transubstantiation is the teaching that during the Mass, at the consecration in the Lord's Supper (Communion), the elements of the Eucharist, bread and wine, are transformed into the actual body and blood of Jesus; and that they are no longer bread and wine but only retain their appearance of bread and wine.

The "Real Presence" is the term referring to Christ's actual presence in the elements of the bread and the wine that have been transubstantiated.

Paragraph 1376 of the *Catechism of the Catholic Church* (CCC) states,

The Council of Trent summarizes the Catholic faith by declaring: "Because Christ our Redeemer said that it was truly his body that he was offering under the species of bread, it has always been the conviction of the Church of God, and this holy Council now declares again, that by the consecration of the bread and wine there takes place a change of the whole substance of the bread into the substance of the body of Christ our Lord and of the whole substance of the wine into the substance of his blood. This change the holy Catholic Church has fittingly and properly called transubstantiation (CCC, 1376).

Because they are the presence of Christ himself, Catholics worship and adore the elements.

The Mass contains a series of rituals leading up to the Lord's Supper which also contains a reenactment of the sacrifice of Christ. Furthermore, transubstantiation states that the substance of the elements are miraculously changed even though their appearance is not. In other words, the bread and wine will appear as bread and wine under close scientific examination, but the true substance is mystically the Body and Blood of Christ. Synonymous with transubstantiation is the doctrine of the Real Presence. Where transubstantiation is the process of the change, the real presence is the result of that change. In other words, the doctrine of the real presence states that the bread and wine contain the actual presence of Christ in bodily form as a result of the process of transubstantiation. Roman Catholicism states that the incarnation of Christ itself, where Jesus was a man but contained an invisible divine nature, is analogous to the the doctrine of the real presence.

Some of the verses used to substantiate this teaching are the following:

- [Matt. 26:28](#), "for this is My blood of the covenant, which is poured out for many for forgiveness of sins."
- [John 6:52-53](#), "The Jews therefore began to argue with one another, saying, How can this man give us His flesh to eat? ⁵³ Jesus therefore 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 yourselves.""
- [1 Cor. 11:27](#), " Therefore whoever eats the bread or drinks the cup of the Lord in an unworthy manner, shall be guilty of the body and the blood of the Lord."

Can we conclude from the above verses that the Communion Supper actually involves the change of the elements into the mystical Body and Blood of Christ? Let's take a look.

First--there is no indication that the words were meant to be literal

Nowhere in scripture do we find this teaching. We see scriptures refer to the elements as the body and blood, but we also see Jesus clearly stating that the words He was speaking were spiritual words when talking about eating his flesh and drinking his blood: "It is the Spirit who gives life; the flesh profits nothing; the words that I have spoken to you are spirit and are life." ([John 6:63](#)). He did not say they were literal words; that is, He did not say that they were His actual body and blood.

But, a Catholic might object and say that Jesus clearly said, "This is My blood . . ." and "This is my body . . ." This is true, but Jesus frequently spoke in spiritual terms: "I am the bread of life," ([John 6:48](#)); "I am the door," ([John 10:7,9](#)); "I am the resurrection and the life," ([John 11:25](#)); "I am the true vine," ([John 15:1](#)), etc. In the context of John 6, Jesus is telling His disciples that they must eat His body and blood ([John 6:53](#)). He clearly says He was speaking in spiritual terms, ". . . the words that I have spoken to you are spirit and are life." ([John 6:63](#)).

Second--the elements of the communion supper were still referred to as bread and wine

After The institution of the communion supper, both the elements were still referred to as bread and wine.

"And while they were eating, Jesus took *some* bread, and after a blessing, He broke *it* and gave *it* to the disciples, and said, "Take, eat; this is My body." 27 And when He had taken a cup and given thanks, He gave *it* to them, saying, "Drink from it, all of you; 28 for this is My blood of the covenant, which is poured out for many for forgiveness of sins. 29 "But I say to you, I will not drink of this fruit of the vine from now on until that day when I drink it new with you in My Father's kingdom." ([Matt. 26:26-29](#)).

After Jesus said, "This is my blood," ([Matt. 26:28](#)), he said, "But I say to you, I will not drink of this fruit of the vine from now on until that day when I drink it new with you in My Father's kingdom," ([Matt. 26:29](#)). Why would Jesus speak figuratively of His blood as "the fruit of the vine" if it was his literal blood? He called it wine.

"For I received from the Lord that which I also delivered to you, that the Lord Jesus in the night in which He was betrayed took bread; 24 and when He had given thanks, He broke it, and said, "This is My body, which 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 Therefore whoever eats the bread or drinks the cup of the Lord in an unworthy manner, shall be guilty of the body and the blood of the Lord. 28 But let a man examine himself, and so let him eat of the bread and drink of the cup." ([1 Cor. 11:23-28](#)).

If the elements were changed and were really the body and blood, then why does Paul refer to the element of bread as bread and not the literal body of Christ?

Third--there is no indication the disciples thought the elements changed

There is no indication in the biblical accounts of the Last Supper that the disciples thought that the bread and wine changed into the actual body and blood of Christ. Are we to believe that the disciples who were sitting right there with Jesus actually thought that what Jesus was holding in his hands was his literal body and blood? There is no indication that they thought this.

Fourth--there is no indication the disciples worshipped the elements

We see no indication at all that the disciples worshipped the elements. The adoration of the Eucharist is practiced during the Mass. Catholicism says, "Moreover, the Catholic Church has held firm to this belief in the presence of Christ's Body and Blood in the Eucharist not only in her teaching but in her life as well, since she has at all times paid this great Sacrament the worship known as "latria," which may be given to God alone."¹ Where is the worship given the sacrament by the disciples anywhere in the New Testament? It is not there.

Fifth--the supper was instituted before Jesus' crucifixion

The Mass is supposed to be a reenactment of the sacrifice of Christ. Therefore, according to Roman Catholic theology, the bread and wine become the broken body and shed blood of Christ and **are**, somehow, the crucified body and blood of Christ.. But how can this be since Jesus instituted the Supper before He was crucified? Are we to conclude that at the Last Supper, when they were all at the table, that when Jesus broke the bread, it **actually became** His sacrificial body--even though the sacrifice had not yet happened? Likewise are we to conclude that when Jesus gave the wine, that it became His actual sacrificial blood--even though the sacrifice had not yet happened? That would make no sense at all.

Sixth--the Roman Catholic view is a violation of Levitical law

The Roman Catholic interpretation of the Eucharist requires the participant to eat human flesh and drink human blood. Remember, Roman Catholicism teaches that the bread and the wine become the actual body and blood of Christ. Essentially, this amounts to cannibalism. What does the Scripture say concerning this?

"For as for the life of all flesh, its blood is identified with its life. Therefore I said to the sons of Israel, You are not to eat the blood of any flesh, for the life of all flesh is its blood; whoever eats it shall be cut off." ([Lev. 17:14](#)).

Notice that the scripture says that you are not to eat the blood of any flesh. It would certainly appear that the Roman Catholic view is in contradiction to the Old Testament scripture since it advocates the eating of the blood of Christ. To the RCC it is not just symbolic; it is the actual eating and drinking of the body of Christ.

Some Roman Catholics respond by saying that Jesus had instituted the new and everlasting covenant in which the sacrificed body and blood of Christ was reality. Therefore, because it was a new covenant, it was also the sacrificed body and blood. But this cannot work because the new covenant could not yet be instituted until after the death of Christ as the Scriptures state.

"And for this reason He is the mediator of a new covenant, in order that since a death has taken place for the redemption of the transgressions that were committed under the first covenant, those who have been called may receive the promise of the eternal inheritance. 16 For where a covenant is, there must of necessity be the death of the one who made it." ([Heb. 9:15-16](#)).

Therefore we can conclude that the Levitical law was still in effect because the new covenant had not yet been established. So, the Roman Catholic position would have Jesus himself violating Old Testament law by having the disciples drink the blood--if it were literal blood.

Yet another response is that in [Mark 7:19](#) it says, "'because it does not go into his heart, but into his stomach, and is eliminated?'" (Thus He declared all foods clean)." The problem with this response is that it tends to set scripture against scripture and doesn't really address the issue of [Leviticus 17:14](#) and the particularly relevant comments by the Jerusalem Council in [Acts 15:19-20](#) also forbidding the eating of blood. Therefore, it seems that Jesus was declaring all animals were clean in the sense that they do not defile a person. Again, in the Jerusalem Council in Acts 15, James the apostle gives instructions and said, "Therefore it is my judgment that we do not trouble those who are turning to God from among the Gentiles, 20 but that we write to them that they abstain from things contaminated by idols and from fornication and from what is strangled and from blood." ([Acts 15:19-20](#)). Some say this refers only to animal blood. But if that is so, then "all foods clean" (ref. [Mark 7:19](#)) would have to include animal blood. But, that doesn't make sense in light of the instruction is still to abstain from drinking blood.

Seventh --it is a violation of the incarnation

The biblical doctrine of the incarnation states that the Word which was God and was with God ([John 1:1](#)), became flesh and dwelt among us ([John 1:14](#)). This "became flesh" involves what is known as the hypostatic Union. This is the teaching that in the one person of Christ are two natures: divine and human. That is, Jesus is both God and man at the same time, and He will forever be God and man.

Furthermore, by definition, for Jesus to be human, He must be located in one place. This is the nature of being human. A human male does not have the ability to be omnipresent. He can only be in one place at one time. To say that Jesus in His physical form is in more than one place at a time is to deny the incarnation. That is, it denies that Jesus is completely and totally a man--since a man can only be in one place at one time. Therefore, to say that the bread and wine become the body and blood of Christ is to violate the doctrine of the incarnation by stating that Christ is physically present all over the planet as the mass is celebrated. This is a serious problem and a serious denial of the true and absolute incarnation of the Word of God as a man.

But, did not Jesus say in [Matt. 28:18-20](#) that He would be with the disciples always--even to the ends of the earth? Is this not a declaration that Jesus will be physically present everywhere? No, this is not what is stated.

The answer is found in the teaching of the *communicatio idiomatum*. This is the teaching that the attributes of both the divine and human nature are ascribed to the single person of Christ. It does not mean, however, that anything particular to the divine nature was communicated to the human nature. Likewise, it does not mean that anything particular to the human nature was communicated to the divine nature. It means that the attributes of the divine nature are claimed by the person of Christ. Therefore, Jesus is omnipresent--not in His human nature but in His divine nature.

To make this more clear, let's look at some verses that illustrate the *communicatio idiomatum*:

- [John 17:5](#), "And now, glorify Thou Me together with Thyself, Father, with the glory which I had with Thee before the world was."
- [John 3:13](#), "And no one has ascended into heaven, but He who descended from heaven, even the Son of Man."

Please notice that in these two verses, Jesus lays claim to the glory that He had with the Father before the foundation of the world. He also claims to have descended from heaven, but how could these be true since He is a man? The answer is that the attributes of the divine nature are claimed by the person of Christ. Therefore, the person of Christ could claim to have glory with the Father and could claim to descend from heaven. But we know that the man Jesus, in the flesh, did not exist until His conception. Furthermore, this means that the two natures of Christ are distinct, yet they are in Union in the one person of Christ (the hypostatic union). It further means that the attributes of the divine and the attributes of the human are not transferred to one another--the divine does not become localized and the human does not become infinite. If this were the case, then the nature of the divine and the nature of the human will be violated. Therefore, we can see that for Jesus to be a man, He must retain the attributes of humanity. This means that He must be localized, and it means He cannot be physically omnipresent. If He were, by definition He would not be a man. But the Roman Catholic position is that the bread and wine become the actual body and blood of Christ, and this violates the doctrine of the incarnation. Therefore, transubstantiation cannot be the correct teaching of Scripture.

Eighth--the Lord's Supper is not a sacrifice of Christ

The Bible tells us:

"By this will we have been sanctified through the offering of the body of Jesus Christ once for all. ¹¹ And every priest stands daily ministering and offering time after time the same sacrifices, which can never take away sins; ¹² but He, having offered one sacrifice for sins for all time, sat down at the right hand of God, ¹³ waiting from that time onward until His enemies be made a footstool for His feet. ¹⁴ For by one offering He has perfected for all time those who are sanctified. ([Heb. 10:10-14](#)).

In the Roman Catholic Mass, there is a sacrifice of Christ. In other words, in the ceremonies, is a reenactment and an actual sacrifice of Christ per the Mass. This is an obvious contradiction to the Scriptures which teach us that Christ died once for all, and that by the one offering He has perfected for all time those who are sanctified. It does not state in the Word of God that the sacrifice of Christ must be repeated in order to forgive us of our sins or somehow help us to maintain our salvation by the infusion of grace. The fact that Christ died once and the sacrifice occurred once is proof that it is sufficient to cleanse us of our sins. We connect with the sacrifice of Christ by faith--not by a ceremony.

Conclusion

It should be obvious to anyone who believes the word of God that the Roman Catholic doctrine of transubstantiation is not biblical. For the reasons listed above, we urge that Roman Catholics recognize that Jesus Christ died once for all, and that there is no need to participate in a ritual where His re-sacrifice is practiced.

Finally, because the sacrifice of Christ was once for all, it is sufficient to save us; and we do not need to maintain our salvation by our efforts or by our participation in the Lord's supper. It is not a means of grace that secures our salvation or infuses into us the grace needed that then enables us to maintain our salvation by our works. Instead, we are made right before God by faith.

- "being justified as a gift by His grace through the redemption which is in Christ Jesus;" ([Rom. 3:24](#)).
- "Therefore we conclude that a man is justified by faith without the deeds of the law." ([Rom. 3:28](#)).
- "For what saith the scripture? Abraham believed God, and it was counted unto him for righteousness," ([Rom. 4:3](#)).
- "For the promise to Abraham or to his descendants that he would be heir of the world was not through the Law, but through the righteousness of faith." ([Rom. 4:13](#)).
- "Therefore being justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ," ([Rom. 5:1](#)).
- "that if you confess with your mouth Jesus as Lord, and believe in your heart that God raised Him from the dead, you shall be saved;" ([Rom. 10:9](#)).