**BIBLE QUESTIONS: SESSION 14**

**Questions: What are the sacraments? How many are there? *How can God bless us through ordinary material things?* Do all churches have them? Are the sacraments necessary for salvation?** *(Answers to Questions 1 and 2 are taken directly from Luther’s Small Catechism with Explanation, 2018 edition, CPH , pp.281-283*)

1. **What are the sacraments?**
   1. The Lutheran Church usually speaks of a sacrament as a sacred act
      1. instituted by the command of Christ;
      2. in which Christ joins His Word of promise to a visible element;
      3. B.by which He offers and bestows the forgiveness of sins He has earned for us by His suffering, death, and resurrection.
   2. Note: The word *sacrament* comes to us from the Latin translation of the Bible, where the Greek word *mystery* is translated *sacrament*. Originally, *mystery/sacrament* described the saving truths of the Christian faith, such as the Trinity, Christ’s incarnation, redemption, and the Church (for example, **1 Corinthians 4:1; Ephesians 5:32;** and **1 Timothy 3:16**). Later, *sacrament* came to refer to divinely instituted rites, such as Baptism and the Lord’s Supper, to which the Lord attached the promise of His grace. Because they are established by God’s command and convey His grace, we distinguish the sacraments from ceremonies and rites established by human beings (*adiaphora).*
2. **How many sacraments are there?**
   1. The Lutheran Confessions leave the exact numbering of the sacraments open. Holy Baptism and the Lord’s Supper are certainly to be regarded as sacraments. Also, although it does not have a “visible element” (like water or bread and wine), Holy Absolution is sometimes (and properly) counted as a “third sacrament,” as Luther does in the Large Catechism: “Here you see that Baptism, both in its power and meaning, includes also the third Sacrament, which has been called repentance: (LC IV 74). The Apology of the Augsburg Confession also says, “Therefore, Baptism, the Lord’s Supper, and Absolution (which is the Sacrament of Repentance) are truly Sacraments. For these rites have God’s command and promise of grace, which is peculiar to the New Testament” (Ap XIII 4).
      1. **Matthew 28:19** Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit. **Mark 16:16** Whoever believes and is baptized will be saved, but whoever does not believe will be condemned.
      2. **Matthew 26:26-28** **26**Now as they were eating, Jesus took bread, and after blessing it broke it and gave it to the disciples, and said, “Take, eat; this is my body.” **27**And he took a cup, and when he had given thanks he gave it to them, saying, “Drink of it, all of you, **28**for this is my blood of the covenant, which is poured out for many for the forgiveness of sins.
      3. **John 20:22-23** And when He had said this, He breathed on them and said to them, “Receive the Holy Spirit. If you forgive the sins of any, they are forgiven them; if you withhold forgiveness from any, it is withheld.”
   2. Note: The word *sacrament* is not only used to refer to the New Testament Means of Grace such as the Lord’s Supper and Baptism, but may also at times ce used to refer to sacred acts of the Old Testament that conveyed grace, such as circumcision (see Old Testament that conveyed grace, such as circumcision (see **Genesis 17:10-14, where circumcision is also a sign of participation in God’s gracious covenant, and** Colossians 2:11-12**, where circumcision and Baptism are compared).**
3. ***How can God bless us through ordinary material things?*** 
   1. God can use whatever he wants to bless us, and He has frequently attached his promise, blessing and power to created material things.
      1. OT is replete with examples of God attaching his word and promise to ordinary material things. E.g., Naaman and water; Moses struck the rock, threw the log in the spring, etc.
      2. Many people believe that ordinary material things are not suited for God’s use. However, “*God chose what is weak in the world to shame the strong; God chose what is low and despised in the world, even things that are not, to bring to nothing things that are”* (1 Cor 1:28).
         1. God used ordinary human flesh and an ordinary womb to bring his only begotten son into the world.
4. **Do all churches have the sacraments?** No
   1. For certainty of having received a sacrament, the external Word is required, which includes external right intention. I.e., the church must not only speak the words, but confess the right meaning of the words and the intention to give the sacrament, and must use the right elements.
      1. Do not speak the words: E.g….
         1. Some Liberal Protestant Churches use a different baptismal formula (In the Name of the Mother, Daughter, and Holy Spirit, or In the Name of the Creator, Redeemer, Sanctifier). They do not have baptism, even if they intend the Triune God.
         2. Many Protestant Churches do not use the Words of Institution for consecrating the Lord’s Supper—viz. “Our Lord Jesus Christ, on the night in which he was betrayed…”, therefore they do not have the sacrament.
      2. No intention to give the sacrament: E.g…
         1. E.g., Kid’s pretending to baptize on the beach do not perform the sacrament because they do not confess the intention to give the sacrament, they are only playing.
      3. Wrong meaning of the essential words.
         1. Mormons speak the biblical baptismal formula, but they do not confess the right meaning of the words. I.e., “In the Name of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit” is in the name of three distinct gods in their confession. Therefore they do not have baptism.
         2. Some protestant churches have the words of institution, but deny or are ambiguous about the literal truth of the words “this is my body”. Therefore, it is doubtful they have the sacrament.
         3. Roman Catholic transubstantiation, which denies the presence of the bread and wine after consecration, does not deny the body and blood which is of salvific importance, therefore they probably do have the true Sacrament.
      4. Wrong elements: Eg…
         1. baptize with anything but water is not baptism
            1. Immersion not required as it is false to claim that the word “Baptize” can only mean “Immerse”
         2. Anything other than bread (i.e., flour and water baked)
         3. Anything other than wine (fermented juice)
            1. non grape wine is doubtful, as the bible only knows grape wine.
            2. grape juice is not instituted for Christ’s blood. Grape juice was not used because Corinthian church was getting drunk at Lord’s Supper.
5. **Are the Sacraments necessary for salvation?**
   1. Baptism yes (John 3:5)
      1. However, Baptism is not *absolutely necessary* for salvation, since people who die in the faith without having had the opportunity for baptism are saved.
         1. Mark 16:16: Whoever believes and is baptized will be saved, but whoever does not believe will be condemned.
         2. Therefore only faith is *absolutely necessary* for salvation.
   2. Lord’s Supper, no because John 6(:53) is primarily about spiritual eating, though it foreshadows the relevance and gift of the Lord’s Supper.
      1. Cannot refer to physical eating of Lord’s supper because then 6:54 would mean that the Lord’s Supper saves apart from faith. Also, such an interpretation would contradict 1 Cor 11:29, which speaks of “eating and drinking judgment”