

Center of My Beliefs

Competing views on Salvation, Baptism and Communion

1. Salvation

- a. Liberation Theology: “The salvation of all persons is the goal of God’s work in history and must therefore be the task of those who believe in him, utilizing every means possible, including political effort and even revolution if necessary.”
- b. Existential Theology: “Salvation is not an alteration in the substance of the soul, nor is it a forensic declaration that we are righteous in the sight of God. Rather, it is a fundamental alteration of our Existence, our whole outlook on and conduct of life.”
- c. Roman Catholic Theology: “The church is the only channel of God’s grace. This grace is transmitted through the sacraments of the church. Those outside the official or organized church cannot receive it.”

2. Baptism

- a. Baptismal Regeneration: “Baptism effects a transformation, bringing a person from spiritual death to life.”
 - i. *Catholic* – “The sacrament itself is self-sufficient to confer grace.”
 - ii. *Lutheran* – “The sacrament is ineffectual unless faith is already present.”

- b. Reformed / Presbyterian: “The sacrament is a sign and seal of God’s grace rather than a means of it.” Emphasizes predestination and sees baptism simply as marking the recognition of God’s covenant.
- c. Baptism as a Token: “Baptism is a token, an outward symbol or indication of the inward change that has been effected in the believer.” Emphasizes believers-baptism.

3. Lord’s Supper (Communion)

- a. Roman Catholic View: “Transubstantiation is the doctrine that as the administering priest consecrates the elements, an actual metaphysical change takes place. All who participate in the Holy Eucharist take the physical body and blood of Christ into themselves.”
- b. Lutheran View: “The molecules are not changed into flesh and blood, but the body and blood are present “in, with, and under” the bread and wine.”
- c. Reformed View: “Christ is present in the Lord’s Supper but not physically or bodily. Rather, his presence in the sacrament is spiritual or dynamic. The elements are also seal the love of Christ to believers, giving them the assurance that all the promises of the covenant and the riches of the gospels are theirs by a divine donation.”
- d. Zwinglian View: “The Lord’s Supper is merely a commemoration. It brings to mind the death of Christ and its efficacy on behalf of the believer. Thus the Lord’s Supper is essentially a commemoration of Christ’s death.”

Quoted excerpts come from Christian Theology, Millard J. Erickson, Baker Books, 1988.

“I am the way, the truth and the life, no man comes to the father except by me.” – Jesus (John 14:6)