

Ex. 12:1=13 (LD 25, Q/A66-68) “The Blood Shall Be a Sign for You”

For the Children: Sometimes it is not enough for us to have things explained in words. For example, a teacher might explain how the body's heart pumps your blood around; they might tell you a lot about veins and arteries. But then they show you a model of the human body, or of the heart, and you understand much better. God's Word explains about how the Lord Jesus saves us from our sins. That Word should be enough for us. But we are weak. So the Lord has given us sacraments (baptism and Lord's Supper) to give us a picture of how He saves us. That helps us understand better – though we still need God's Spirit to give us a true understanding.

Questions: Are sacraments a totally different way of learning than God's Word? How are sacraments a “sign”? How are they a “seal”?

Introduction:

First Point: The Sacrament Teaches

- 1) How It Teaches: The sacraments teach what is already in God's Word by symbolic actions involving our various senses. The truth is driven home to the whole person in this way.
- 2) What It Teaches: LD 25 states that the sacraments teach the Gospel – the forgiveness of sins and eternal life, by grace alone on the ground of Christ's work alone. Sacraments “focus our faith” on this Gospel. They do not guarantee us that everyone who partakes is necessarily regenerate. In Ex. 12. the Gospel is put in terms of the sacrifice of the unblemished lamb, and the deliverance from bondage to Egypt. This is fulfilled in Christ's sacrifice (1 Pet. 1:18-19). The Passover also teaches other truths: the sharing of brothers in unity; God's provision for His people; the difference between those of the world and God's people; and the need for a faithful, obedient and holy response to this grace by God's people. They also teach us about the covenant (cf. God's covenant Name, “Yahweh,” v. 12) – for they are “signs and seals of the covenant of grace” (WCF 27:1, citing Gen. 17:7,10).

Second Point: The Sacrament Confirms

- 1) How It Confirms: LD 25 speaks of sacraments confirming, sealing and assuring us. A seal guarantees authenticity, quality, and protection from tampering. The quality of the salvation promised in the sacraments is guaranteed by the Lord.
- 2) What It Confirms: The sacraments confirm the teaching signified by those same sacraments, summed up as the “Gospel promise” in the “covenant of grace.” The Passover assured Israel that God really did deliver them, forgive them, provide for them, unify them and make them holy. They were assured that God really is the Lord, while Egypt's gods were nothing.
- 3) The Mercy of Re-Assurance: This re-assurance is a mercy on God's part. Instead of punishing us for doubting His Word and oath, He gives us more guarantees in the sacraments.

Third Point: The Sacrament Demonstrates Faith

- 1) An Act of Faith: The sacraments require faith and obedience from God's people, demonstrated in using them as God commands. Faith was required to paint blood on the doors, to prepare the animal carefully, to prepare and dress for haste, to refrain from storing left-over lamb. They had to trust the Lord to embark on the Exodus – trust that He would care for them and forgive their sins. Sacraments then and now strengthen faith, but they also call on us to exercise it.
- 2) Dealing with Households: However, sacraments do not assume that every person participating will possess that saving faith. The Lord was dealing with the church as a whole (vss. 5-6), and with households (vss. 3-4). But the focus in the sacraments remained on how God saves, not the state of each individual. Children would thus learn from the sacraments (Ex. 12:26-27). It is part of the privilege of covenant-membership (today as then) that both children and adults are taught and re-assured about the Gospel.

Conclusion: