

II. The second condition of worthy participation is discernment of the spiritual significance of the Lord's Supper. This means we need to understand the meaning of this ordinance.

One aspect of the question of spiritual meaning relates to the question of whether any special grace or blessing is communicated in the Supper, and if so, by what means?

When a clergyman officiates at the Lord's table, is he a priest or a leader and a minister?

When the person officiating is a priest, God's blessing comes through him as a mediator, as a channel. It comes down from heaven, flows through him, flows into the elements, and through the elements into the souls of the recipients. The participants are passive, and God's grace accompanies the elements as they partake of them.

When the person officiating is a leader and a minister, he leads the people in this ordinance, and he declares the Word of God to them. The only mediator between each participant and God is Jesus Christ. There is no human being through whom God's grace comes to the participant, and no human being through whom the participant comes to Christ. Each individual has direct access to Christ Himself. The participant is active, and God's blessing comes to him only as he exercises faith in the spiritual realities that the elements signify.

A second aspect of the question of spiritual meaning relates to the question of what "recognizing the body" or "discerning the body" means. How is this expression used in 1 Corinthians 11? Let's look at the passage.

In verse 20 Paul says that when the Corinthian believers came together as a church to eat the Lord's Supper, it was not a true Lord's Supper! This shows that it is possible for a church to go through the motions, to follow a ritual, and yet miss God's intention!