THE QUESTION

Did the early Christians believe Communion is truly Christ's body and blood?

Asked by a THF member on May 20, 2026 · published November 9, 2026 · 13 numbered quotations · the 23 early Christian passages and 86 Bible verses we kept are listed at the back, each with a link.

Read it online: thehistoricfaith.com/early-church-questions/did-the-early-christians-believe-communion-is-truly-christs-body-and-blood

The short answer *From the text: says what the passages say*

Yes. Early writers say that once the bread and cup receive God's word and prayer, they are no longer common food but the body and blood of Christ. They taught that it feeds our bodies with the hope of resurrection, while also calling it a thankful remembrance of His suffering.

LIBRARY ONLY	This study was written only from The Historic Faith’s library of early-Christian writings and the Bible, never from the web. Every passage we kept from what the library gave is listed at the back, with a link to read it.
HOW IT WAS MADE	Compiled by machine learning from The Historic Faith’s library of early-Christian writings and the Bible only. Every quotation was matched word for word against our stored text. Not yet reviewed by The Historic Faith.
SHARING WITH AN AI?	Every quotation here comes from The Historic Faith’s library. If you paste this study into an AI, anything it adds beyond these pages comes from that AI, not from us.

IN THIS STUDY

1	It is no longer common bread	2	6	It is also a thankful remembrance	4
2	The early church called it Christ's flesh	2	7	The mixed cup joins the people to Christ	5
3	The cup is a sharing in His blood	3	8	It was kept for the baptized	5
4	It gives our bodies hope of resurrection	3		What these passages don’t tell us	6
5	Outsiders twisted it into ordinary flesh	4		The Sources: 23 early Christian passages and 86 Bible verses, with links	6

© 2026 The Historic Faith · Library only, never the web · For personal study; please don’t republish.

POINT 1 OF 8

It is no longer common bread

Our note · compiled by machine learning · From the text: says what the passages say

Irenaeus says bread from the earth, after the prayer calling on God, becomes the Eucharist, with an earthly and a heavenly side. Justin also says Christians do not receive it as ordinary bread and drink, and compares it to the Word becoming flesh.

1 "For just as the bread, which is produced from the earth, when it receives the invocation of God, is no longer common bread but the Eucharist, consisting of two realities, earthly and heavenly; so also our bodies, when they receive the Eucharist, are no longer corruptible, having the hope of the resurrection to eternity."

EARLY CHRISTIAN WRITER **Irenaeus,** *Against Heresies: Book IV* (c. 175–202 AD) **Source 7, page 7** Read it in the library ›
THF's updated English

2 "We do not receive these as common bread and drink, but in the same way that Jesus Christ our Savior became flesh by the Word of God and had flesh and blood for our salvation, we have been taught that the food blessed by His word and prayer, which nourishes our blood and flesh through transformation, is the flesh and blood of Jesus who became flesh."

EARLY CHRISTIAN WRITER **Justin Martyr,** *First Apology* (c. 130–165 AD) **Source 3, page 7** Read it in the library ›
THF's updated English

POINT 2 OF 8

The early church called it Christ's flesh

Our note · compiled by machine learning · From the text: says what the passages say

Ignatius says some people stayed away from the Eucharist because they denied it is the flesh of Christ who suffered and rose. Tertullian speaks plainly of receiving 'the Lord's Body.'

3 "They abstain from the Eucharist and from prayer, because they do not acknowledge the Eucharist to be the flesh of our Savior Jesus Christ, who suffered for our sins, and whom the Father, in His goodness, raised up again."

EARLY CHRISTIAN WRITER **Ignatius of Antioch,** *Epistle to the Smyrnaeans* (c. 98–117 AD) **Source 2, page 6** Read it in the library ›
THF's updated English

© 2026 The Historic Faith · Library only, never the web · For personal study; please don't republish.

4 “When the Lord's Body has been received and reserved, both points are secured: sharing in the sacrifice and carrying out the duty.”

EARLY CHRISTIAN WRITER **Tertullian,** *On Prayer* 19 (c. 196–220 AD) **Source 14, page 7** Read it in the library ›
THF's updated English

POINT 3 OF 8

The cup is a sharing in His blood

Our note · compiled by machine learning · From the text: says what the passages say

Irenaeus argues that if Christ did not really take flesh and blood to save us, the cup and bread could not be a sharing in His blood and body. He ties the Eucharist to a real incarnation.

5 “If the flesh does not attain salvation, then the Lord did not redeem us with His blood, nor is the cup of the Eucharist a communion of His blood, nor the bread we break a communion of His body.”

EARLY CHRISTIAN WRITER **Irenaeus,** *Against Heresies: Book V* (c. 175–202 AD) **Source 8, page 7** Read it in the library ›
THF's updated English

POINT 4 OF 8

It gives our bodies hope of resurrection

Our note · compiled by machine learning · From the text: says what the passages say

Irenaeus says our flesh is fed by the cup that is Christ's blood and the bread that is His body. Because of this, our bodies carry the hope of rising to eternal life.

6 “He does not speak of some spiritual and invisible person, for a spirit does not have bones or flesh; but he is referring to the arrangement by which the Lord became an actual man, consisting of flesh, and nerves, and bones,—that flesh which is nourished by the cup that is His blood, and grows from the bread that is His body.”

EARLY CHRISTIAN WRITER **Irenaeus,** *Against Heresies: Book V* (c. 175–202 AD) **Source 6, page 7** Read it in the library ›
THF's updated English

© 2026 The Historic Faith · Library only, never the web · For personal study; please don’t republish.

7 “For just as the bread, which is produced from the earth, when it receives the invocation of God, is no longer common bread but the Eucharist, consisting of two realities, earthly and heavenly; so also our bodies, when they receive the Eucharist, are no longer corruptible, having the hope of the resurrection to eternity.”

EARLY CHRISTIAN WRITER **Irenaeus,** *Against Heresies: Book IV* (c. 175–202 AD) **Source 7, page 7** **Read it in the library ›**
THF's updated English

POINT 5 OF 8

Outsiders twisted it into ordinary flesh

Our note · compiled by machine learning · From the text: says what the passages say

Irenaeus reports that servants who heard the communion was Christ's body and blood took it as plain meat, and persecutors used this to accuse martyrs. He presents that as a misunderstanding of what Christians meant.

8 “When the Greeks arrested the slaves of Christian catechumens and used force to learn some secret practiced among Christians, these slaves could only tell their tormentors that they had heard from their masters that the divine communion was the body and blood of Christ. They imagined it was literally flesh and blood and told their inquisitors this.”

EARLY CHRISTIAN WRITER **Irenaeus,** *Fragments from the Lost Writings of Irenæus* (c. 175–202 AD) **Source 9, page 7** **Read it in the library ›**
THF's updated English

POINT 6 OF 8

It is also a thankful remembrance

Our note · compiled by machine learning · From the text: says what the passages say

Origen calls the Eucharist bread a sign of thanks to God. Justin says Christians offer prayers and thanks in a meal of food and drink that recalls the suffering of the Son of God.

9 “And we have a symbol of gratitude to God in the bread that we call the Eucharist.”

EARLY CHRISTIAN WRITER **Origen,** *Against Celsus* 57 (c. 215–254 AD) **Source 18, page 7** **Read it in the library ›**
THF's updated English

© 2026 The Historic Faith · Library only, never the web · For personal study; please don’t republish.

10 “For such alone Christians have committed to offer, in remembrance brought about by their solid and liquid food, which recalls the suffering endured by the Son of God.”

EARLY CHRISTIAN WRITER **Justin Martyr,** *Dialogue with Trypho* (c. 130–165 AD)
THF's updated English

Source 4, page 7 **Read it in the library ›**

POINT 7 OF 8

The mixed cup joins the people to Christ

Our note · compiled by machine learning · From the text: says what the passages say

Cyprian explains why water is mixed with the wine: the water stands for the people and the wine for Christ's blood. Many grains made into one loaf show that believers are one body in Christ.

11 “But when the water is mixed with wine in the cup, the people are made one with Christ, and the assembly of believers is joined and united with Him in whom it believes.”

later in the same passage

“In this very sacrament our people are shown to be made one, so that, in the same way many grains gathered together, ground, and mixed into one mass make one bread, so in Christ, who is the heavenly bread, we may know that there is one body, with which our number is joined and united.”

EARLY CHRISTIAN WRITER **Cyprian,** *Epistles* (c. 248–258 AD)
THF's updated English

Source 20, page 8 **Read it in the library ›**

POINT 8 OF 8

It was kept for the baptized

Our note · compiled by machine learning · From the text: says what the passages say

The Didache allows only the baptized to receive, quoting Christ's warning not to give what is holy to dogs. Tertullian says believers received it at early morning gatherings from the church's leaders.

12 “But let no one eat or drink of your Thanksgiving, or Eucharist, except those who have been baptized into the name of the Lord.”

EARLY CHRISTIAN WRITER **Didache,** *Teaching of the Twelve Apostles* 9 (c. 50–120 AD)
THF's updated English

Source 1, page 6 **Read it in the library ›**

© 2026 The Historic Faith · Library only, never the web · For personal study; please don’t republish.

13 “We also receive the sacrament of the Eucharist in congregational meetings before daybreak, and from the hand of no one except the presidents.”

EARLY CHRISTIAN WRITER **Tertullian,** *De Corona* 3 (c. 196–220 AD) **Source 15, page 7** **Read it in the library ›**
THF's updated English

THE LIMITS

What these passages don’t tell us

- These passages do not explain how the bread and cup become Christ's body and blood.
- Origen's word 'symbol' and Irenaeus' 'body and blood' stand side by side here; the passages do not say how the writers fit them together.
- A word-for-word match shows that a quotation really is in our text. It does not show that our reading of it is right, or who wrote each work.

WHERE EVERY QUOTE CAME FROM

The Sources

The 23 early Christian passages and 86 Bible verses we kept for this question (repeats and weak or off-topic search hits were left out): early Christian passages first (sources 1–23, grouped by writer, earliest first), then Bible verses in The Faith Once Delivered Bible (sources 24–36, in Bible order), then 73 more verses THF links to these passages, by reference. **Quote 1, page 2** beside a source shows where the study quotes it. Passages are in THF’s updated English unless marked “1885 English” (the Roberts–Donaldson translation, public domain). “… [continues online]” marks a passage the library gave only in part. **On paper?** At **thehistoricfaith.com**, Bible verses are in the **Audio Bible** and early Christian writings in the **Library** (search for the title).

EARLY CHRISTIAN WRITERS *23 passages from 9 writers*

Didache, *c. 50–120 AD · source 1*

1 *Teaching of the Twelve Apostles* 9 **Quote 12, page 5** “about the Thanksgiving, or Eucharist, give thanks in this way. First, about the cup: "We thank You, our Father, for the holy vine of David Your Servant, which You made… [continues online] **read ›**

Ignatius of Antioch, *c. 98–117 AD · source 2*

2 *Epistle to the Smyrnaeans* (1885 English) **Quote 3, page 2** “abstain from the Eucharist and from prayer, because they confess not the Eucharist to be the flesh of our Saviour Jesus Christ, which suffered for our sins, and which the… [continues online] **read ›**

© 2026 The Historic Faith · Library only, never the web · For personal study; please don’t republish.

Justin Martyr, *c. 130–165 AD · sources 3–5*

3 *First Apology* **Quote 2, page 2** “food is called among us [the Eucharist], and only those who believe that our teachings are true, have been washed with the washing for the remission of sins and renewal… [continues online] **read ›**

4 *Dialogue with Trypho* **Quote 10, page 5** “Christ commanded us to offer, specifically in the Eucharist of the bread and the cup, and which Christians present everywhere around the world, confirms that they are pleasing to Him… [continues online] **read ›**

5 *Dialogue with Trypho* (on point 6) to be presented on behalf of those purified from leprosy, was a symbol of the bread of the Eucharist. This celebration, our Lord Jesus Christ established in remembrance of the… [continues online] **read ›**

Irenaeus, *c. 175–202 AD · sources 6–10*

6 *Against Heresies: Book V* **Quote 6, page 3** “therefore, the mixed cup and the made bread receive the Word of God, and the Eucharist of the blood and body of Christ is formed, from which the substance of… [continues online] **read ›**

7 *Against Heresies: Book IV* **Quotes 1, 7, pages 2, 4** “as the bread, which is produced from the earth, when it receives the invocation of God, is no longer common bread but the Eucharist, consisting of two realities, earthly and… [continues online] **read ›**

8 *Against Heresies: Book V* **Quote 5, page 3** “does not attain salvation, then the Lord did not redeem us with His blood, nor is the cup of the Eucharist a communion of His blood, nor the bread we… [continues online] **read ›**

9 *Fragments from the Lost Writings of Irenæus* (1885 English) **Quote 8, page 4** “when the Greeks, having arrested the slaves of Christian catechumens, then used force against them, in order to learn from them some secret thing [practised] among Christians, these slaves, having… [continues online] **read ›**

10 *Against Heresies: Book IV* (1885 English; on point 1) “again, who maintain that the things around us originated from apostasy, ignorance, and passion, do, while offering unto Him the fruits of ignorance, passion, and apostasy, sin against their Father… [continues online] **read ›**

Clement of Alexandria, *c. 190–215 AD · sources 11–12*

11 *Instructor* 1.6 the Word declares that He Himself is the bread of heaven. For He says, "Moses did not give you that bread from heaven, but My Father gives you the true… [continues online] **read ›**

12 *Stromata* 1.10 (1885 English) “breaking the bread, He presented it, that we might eat it, according to reason, and that knowing the Scriptures we might walk obediently… [continues online] **read ›**

Tertullian, *c. 196–220 AD · sources 13–16*

13 *On Prayer* 6 as well. For the Lord commands that bread be prayed for, which is the only food necessary for believers. For all other things the nations seek after, Matthew 6:32… [continues online] **read ›**

14 *On Prayer* 19 (1885 English) **Quote 4, page 3** “then, the Eucharist cancel a service devoted to God, or bind it more to God… [continues online] **read ›**

15 *De Corona* 3 (1885 English) **Quote 13, page 6** “take also, in congregations before daybreak, and from the hand of none but the presidents, the sacrament of the Eucharist, which the Lord both commanded to be eaten at meal… [continues online] **read ›**

16 *To His Wife* 2.5 “if he knows it to be bread, does he not believe it to be that bread which it is said to be… [continues online] **read ›**

Origen, *c. 215–254 AD · sources 17–18*

17 *Commentary on John* 6 have no life in you.” And in His character as food, He is understood in different ways as living bread or as flesh. So also He, the same person, is… [continues online] **read ›**

18 *Against Celsus* 57 **Quote 9, page 4** “we have a symbol of gratitude to God in the bread… [continues online] **read ›**

© 2026 The Historic Faith · Library only, never the web · For personal study; please don’t republish.

Cyprian, *c. 248–258 AD · sources 19–22*

19 *Treatises* "is ours. And just as we say, "Our Father," because He is the Father of those who understand and believe, so also we call it our bread, because Christ is… [continues online] **read ›**

20 *Epistles* (1885 English) **Quote 11, page 5** "which very sacrament our people are shown to be made one, so that in like manner as many grains, collected, and ground, and mixed together into one mass, make one… [continues online] **read ›**

21 *Epistles* confession, and by the laying on of the hands of the bishop and clergy receive the right of communion, now, before their time is fulfilled, while persecution is still raging… [continues online] **read ›**

22 *Epistles* (on point 7) with this idea: although in the morning only water is clearly offered, yet when we come to supper we offer the mixed cup? But when we eat supper, we cannot… [continues online] **read ›**

Apostolic Constitutions, *c. 250–380 AD · source 23*

23 *Apostolic Constitutions* (1885 English; on point 6) in the same night that He was betrayed, He took bread… [continues online] **read ›**

THE BIBLE *13 verses, The Faith Once Delivered Bible (Old Testament from the Septuagint), in Bible order*

24 **Matthew 7:6** Do not give that which is holy to the dogs, neither throw your pearls before the pigs, lest perhaps they trample them under their feet, and turn and tear you to pieces. **read ›**

25 **Matthew 26:26** As they were eating, Jesus took bread, gave thanks for it, and broke it. He gave it to the disciples and said, "Take, eat; this is my body." **read ›**

26 **Mark 2:12** He rose immediately, took up the mat, and went out in front of them all, so that they were all amazed and glorified God, saying, "We have never seen anything like this!" **read ›**

27 **Mark 14:22** As they were eating, Jesus took bread, and when he had blessed it, he broke it and gave it to them, and said, "Take, eat. This is my body." **read ›**

28 **Mark 14:23** He took the cup, and when he had given thanks, he gave it to them. They all drank of it. **read ›**

29 **Luke 7:6** Jesus went with them. When he was now not far from the house, the centurion sent friends to him, saying to him, "Lord, do not trouble yourself, for I am not worthy for you to come under my roof. **read ›**

30 **John 1:12** But as many as received him, to them he gave the right to become children of God, to those who believe in his name, **read ›**

31 **John 6:53** Jesus therefore said to them, "Amen, amen, I say to you, unless you eat the flesh of the Son of Man and drink his blood, you do not have life in yourselves. **read ›**

32 **1 Corinthians 10:16** The cup of blessing which we bless, is it not a sharing in the blood of Christ? The bread which we break, is it not a sharing in the body of Christ? **read ›**

33 **1 Corinthians 10:17** Because there is one loaf of bread, we, who are many, are one body; for we all partake of the one loaf of bread. **read ›**

34 **1 Corinthians 11:23** For I received from the Lord what I also delivered to you: that the Lord Jesus, on the night in which he was betrayed, took bread, **read ›**

35 **1 Corinthians 11:27** Therefore whoever eats this bread or drinks the Lord's cup in a way unworthy of the Lord will be guilty of the body and the blood of the Lord. **read ›**

36 **Colossians 1:14** in whom we have our redemption, the forgiveness of our sins. **read ›**

ALSO LINKED BY THF TO THESE PASSAGES *73 verses, by reference*

Partly machine-linked: related to the passages, not always quoted in them. Each reference links to the verse in our audio Bible.

Leviticus 14:10

Joshua 3:5 · 3:7 · 5:10

Psalms 23:1

© 2026 The Historic Faith · Library only, never the web · For personal study; please don't republish.

Isaiah 40:11 · 55:1
Ezekiel 34:13
Malachi 1:10
Matthew 1:1 · 1:18 · 5:45 · 6:1 · 6:32 · 6:33 · 6:34 · 7:9 · 11:27 · 12:31 · 12:37 · 15:26 · 18:12 · 26:24 · 26:29 · 26:39
Mark 7:27 · 14:25
Luke 7:43 · 10:22 · 11:5 · 11:11 · 12:16 · 12:29 · 12:50 · 16:9 · 22:19 · 24:39
John 1:18 · 4:1 · 5:8 · 6:32 · 6:33 · 6:35 · 8:42 · 14:2 · 14:16 · 15:1
Acts 8:20 · 8:30
Romans 6:23 · 11:16 · 11:32 · 13:2
1 Corinthians 2:6 · 2:15 · 12:4 · 15:8 · 15:36 · 15:53
2 Corinthians 2:17 · 4:4 · 12:3 · 12:9
Galatians 1:1
Ephesians 1:10 · 5:30
Philippians 4:17
1 Timothy 2:2
2 Timothy 2:1
1 Peter 2:5 · 2:9
1 John 4:1 · 5:8

Searched: Ante-Nicene Fathers volumes 1–9 and the Bible, including the Septuagint.

ABOUT THIS STUDY

A THF member asked “Did the early Christians believe Communion is truly Christ's body and blood?” on May 20, 2026. The Historic Faith answered it as a public study on November 9, 2026.

Library only. This study was written only from The Historic Faith’s library of early-Christian writings and the Bible, never from the web. Every passage we kept from what the library gave is listed above, with a link to read it.

How it was made. Compiled by machine learning from The Historic Faith’s library of early-Christian writings and the Bible only. Every quotation was matched word for word against our stored text. Not yet reviewed by The Historic Faith.

How to cite this study. The Historic Faith, “Did the early Christians believe Communion is truly Christ's body and blood?” Early Church Questions, published November 9, 2026, https://thehistoricfaith.com/early-church-questions/did-the-early-christians-believe-communion-is-truly-christs-body-and-blood. To cite one quotation, add its number and source, for example “quote 1, source 7.”

© 2026 The Historic Faith. Selection, arrangement and editing by THF; machine-compiled text and public-domain quotations are not claimed. For personal study; please don’t republish.

THEHISTORICFAITH.COM

THE END OF THIS STUDY