THE QUESTION

What did the early church believe about Communion?

Asked by a THF member on May 2, 2026 · published November 9, 2026 · 14 numbered quotations · the 29 early Christian passages and 38 Bible verses we kept are listed at the back, each with a link.

Read it online: thehistoricfaith.com/early-church-questions/what-did-the-early-church-believe-about-communion

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

The early church treated Communion, which they called the Eucharist, as the center of Sunday worship. They called the bread and cup Christ's body and blood, did it in remembrance of his death and resurrection, saw it as a sign of church unity, and kept it for baptized believers living at peace.

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.
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POINT 1 OF 7

Christians gathered every Lord's Day for it

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

The Didache tells believers to meet on every Lord's Day to break bread and give thanks after confessing their sins. Justin Martyr describes the service: prayers, a kiss of greeting, bread and a cup brought to the leader, a long thanksgiving, and the people's Amen.

1 “But on every Lord's Day, gather together, break bread, and give thanks after you have confessed your sins, so that your sacrifice may be pure.”

EARLY CHRISTIAN WRITER **Didache,** *Teaching of the Twelve Apostles* 14 (c. 50–120 AD) **Source 2, page 6** Read it in the library ›
THF's updated English

2 “When he has concluded the prayers and thanksgivings, all present express their agreement by saying "Amen."”

EARLY CHRISTIAN WRITER **Justin Martyr,** *First Apology* (c. 130–165 AD) **Source 10, page 7** Read it in the library ›
THF's updated English

POINT 2 OF 7

They called it Christ's body and blood

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

Justin says Christians do not receive the bread and cup as ordinary food, but as the flesh and blood of Jesus. Ignatius warns against people who stayed away from the Eucharist because they denied it was the flesh of the Savior.

3 “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 8, page 7** Read it in the library ›
THF's updated English

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4 “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 7, page 7** **Read it in the library ›**
THF's updated English

POINT 3 OF 7

It was done in remembrance of Christ

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

The early liturgies repeat Jesus' command to do this in remembrance of him, and add that it confesses his resurrection too. Justin says the Lord set up this celebration to remember the suffering he endured for those cleansed from sin.

5 “Do this in remembrance of Me. For as often as you eat this bread and drink this cup, you show the Lord's death and confess His resurrection, until He comes.”

EARLY CHRISTIAN WRITER **Early Liturgies,** *Divine Liturgy of St. James* 1 (c. 200–400 AD) **Source 20, page 8** **Read it in the library ›**
THF's updated English

6 “This celebration, our Lord Jesus Christ established in remembrance of the suffering He endured for those purified in soul from all sin.”

EARLY CHRISTIAN WRITER **Justin Martyr,** *Dialogue with Trypho* (c. 130–165 AD) **Source 9, page 7** **Read it in the library ›**
THF's updated English

POINT 4 OF 7

One Eucharist showed one united church

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

Ignatius links the one Eucharist to the one flesh of Christ, the one cup, one altar and one bishop. He tells believers that a proper Eucharist is the one led by the bishop or someone he trusts with it.

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7 “Take care, then, to have only one Eucharist. For there is one flesh of our Lord Jesus Christ, and one cup to show the unity of His blood; one altar; as there is one bishop, along with the presbytery and deacons, my fellow-servants: so that, whatever you do, you may do it according to the will of God.”

EARLY CHRISTIAN WRITER **Ignatius of Antioch,** *Epistle to the Philadelphians* (c. 98–117 AD) **Source 4, page 6** Read it in the library ›
THF's updated English

8 “Consider that to be a proper Eucharist which is administered by the bishop or by someone he has entrusted it to.”

EARLY CHRISTIAN WRITER **Ignatius of Antioch,** *Epistle to the Smyrnaeans* (c. 98–117 AD) **Source 6, page 7** Read it in the library ›
THF's updated English

POINT 5 OF 7

They saw it as medicine for eternal life

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

Ignatius calls the one broken bread the medicine of immortality that keeps us from dying. Irenaeus argues that bodies which receive the Eucharist have the hope of rising again, because the blessed bread is no longer common bread.

9 “Come together both collectively and individually, through grace, in one faith of God the Father, and of Jesus Christ His only-begotten Son, and “the first-born of every creature,” but of the seed of David according to the flesh, being under the guidance of the Comforter, in obedience to the bishop and the presbytery with an undivided mind, breaking one and the same bread, which is the medicine of immortality and the antidote which prevents us from dying, but a cleansing remedy driving away evil, resulting in us living in God through Jesus Christ.”

EARLY CHRISTIAN WRITER **Ignatius of Antioch,** *Epistle of Ignatius to the Ephesians* (c. 98–117 AD) **Source 5, page 7** Read it in the library ›
THF's updated English

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10 “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 13, page 7** **Read it in the library ›**
THF's updated English

POINT 6 OF 7

Christ's words tied it to forgiveness

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

In the Liturgy of St. James, the Lord's words over the bread and cup speak of his body broken and his blood shed for the remission of sins. The prayer repeats these words at every service.

11 “Take, eat. This is my body, broken for you and given for the remission of sins.”

EARLY CHRISTIAN WRITER **Early Liturgies,** *Divine Liturgy of St. James* 1 (c. 200–400 AD) **Source 21, page 8** **Read it in the library ›**
THF's updated English

12 “Drink all of it. This is my blood of the new testament, shed for you and many, and distributed for the remission of sins.""”

EARLY CHRISTIAN WRITER **Early Liturgies,** *Divine Liturgy of St. James* 1 (c. 200–400 AD) **Source 22, page 8** **Read it in the library ›**
THF's updated English

POINT 7 OF 7

Only baptized believers at peace could share

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

The Didache allows only the baptized to eat and drink, quoting the Lord's warning about giving what is holy to dogs. It also says anyone in conflict with a fellow believer should wait until they are reconciled.

13 “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) **Source 1, page 6** **Read it in the library ›**
THF's updated English

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14 “But let no one who is in conflict with a fellow believer come together with you until they are reconciled, so that your sacrifice may not be defiled.”

EARLY CHRISTIAN WRITER **Didache,** *Teaching of the Twelve Apostles* 14 (c. 50–120 AD) **Source 2, page 6** **Read it in the library ›**
THF's updated English

THE LIMITS

What these passages don’t tell us

- These passages do not explain exactly how the bread and wine become Christ's body and blood.
- They describe practice in a few places and times and do not show every local custom.
- 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 29 early Christian passages and 38 Bible verses we kept for this question (repeats and weak or off-topic search hits were left out): early Christian passages first (sources 1–29, grouped by writer, earliest first), then Bible verses in The Faith Once Delivered Bible (sources 30–32, in Bible order), then 35 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 *29 passages from 12 writers*

Didache, *c. 50–120 AD · sources 1–2*

1 *Teaching of the Twelve Apostles* 9 **Quote 13, page 5** “bread was scattered over the hills, and then was gathered together and became one, so let Your Church be gathered together from the ends of the earth into Your kingdom… [continues online] **read ›**

2 *Teaching of the Twelve Apostles* 14 (1885 English) **Quotes 1, 14, pages 2, 6** “every Lord's day gather yourselves together, and break bread, and give thanksgiving after having confessed your transgressions, that your sacrifice may be pure… [continues online] **read ›**

Ignatius of Antioch, *c. 98–117 AD · sources 3–7*

3 *Epistle to the Philadelphians* (1885 English; on point 4) “loaf also is broken to all [the communicants], and one cup is distributed among them all: there is but one altar for the whole Church, and one bishop, with the… [continues online] **read ›**

4 *Epistle to the Philadelphians* (1885 English) **Quote 7, page 4** “ye heed, then, to have but one Eucharist… [continues online] **read ›**

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5 *Epistle of Ignatius to the Ephesians* (1885 English) **Quote 9, page 4** "ye all come together in common, and individually, through grace, in one faith of God the Father, and of Jesus Christ His only-begotten Son, and "the first-born of… [continues online] **read ›**

6 *Epistle to the Smyrnaeans* (1885 English) **Quote 8, page 4** "that be deemed a proper Eucharist, which is [administered] either by the bishop, or by one to whom he has entrusted it… [continues online] **read ›**

7 *Epistle to the Smyrnaeans* **Quote 4, page 3** "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… [continues online] **read ›**

Justin Martyr, *c. 130–165 AD · sources 8–10*

8 *First Apology* (1885 English) **Quote 3, page 2** "in like manner as Jesus Christ our Saviour, having been made flesh by the Word of God, had both flesh and blood for our salvation, so likewise have we been… [continues online] **read ›**

9 *Dialogue with Trypho* **Quote 6, page 3** "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 ›**

10 *First Apology* (1885 English) **Quote 2, page 2** "when the president has given thanks, and all the people have expressed their assent, those who are called by us deacons give to each of those present to partake of… [continues online] **read ›**

Tatian, *c. 150–180 AD · source 11*

11 *Diatessaron* 19 (on point 5) his disciples. But there were other boats from Tiberias near the place where they had eaten the bread after Jesus blessed it. So when the crowd saw that Jesus was… [continues online] **read ›**

Irenaeus, *c. 175–202 AD · sources 12–14*

12 *Against Heresies: Book V* (1885 English; on point 2) "if this indeed do not attain salvation, then neither did the Lord redeem us with His blood, nor is the cup of the Eucharist the communion of His blood, nor… [continues online] **read ›**

13 *Against Heresies: Book IV* **Quote 10, page 5** change their opinion or stop offering the things just mentioned. But our opinion agrees with the Eucharist, and the Eucharist in turn supports our opinion. For we offer to Him… [continues online] **read ›**

14 *Fragments from the Lost Writings of Irenæus* (1885 English; on point 4) "Anicetus conceded to Polycarp in the Church the celebration of the Eucharist, by way of showing him respect… [continues online] **read ›**

Clement of Alexandria, *c. 190–215 AD · source 15*

15 *Stromata* 1.19 "there are those who celebrate the Eucharist with mere water… [continues online] **read ›**

Tertullian, *c. 196–220 AD · sources 16–18*

16 *On Prayer* 6 shall be added," Matthew 6:33. Although we may rather understand, "Give us this day our daily bread," spiritually. For Christ is our Bread, because Christ is Life, and bread… [continues online] **read ›**

17 *De Corona* 3 (1885 English; on point 1) "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 ›**

18 *On Prayer* 19 (1885 English) "then, the Eucharist cancel a service devoted to God, or bind it more to God… [continues online] **read ›**

Early Liturgies, *c. 200–400 AD · sources 19–22*

19 *Divine Liturgy of St. Mark* 1 (1885 English; on point 3) "do in remembrance of me; for as often as you eat this bread and drink this cup, you do show forth my death and acknowledge my resurrection and ascension until… [continues online] **read ›**

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20 *Divine Liturgy of St. James* 1 (1885 English) **Quote 5, page 3** "do in remembrance of me; for as often as you eat this bread, and drink this cup, you do show forth the Lord's death, and confess His resurrection, till… [continues online] **read ›**

21 *Divine Liturgy of St. James* 1 **Quote 11, page 5** "eat. This is my body, broken for you and… [continues online] **read ›**

22 *Divine Liturgy of St. James* 1 **Quote 12, page 5** "is my blood of the new testament, shed for you and many, and distributed for the remission of sins… [continues online] **read ›**

Origen, *c. 215–254 AD · source 23*

23 *Against Celsus* 57 "we have a symbol of gratitude to God in the bread… [continues online] **read ›**

Dionysius of Alexandria, *c. 232–265 AD · source 24*

24 *Epistles and Epistolary Fragments* (on point 2) "had stood at the holy table and had stretched forth his hands to receive the blessed food, and had received it, and for a very long time had been a… [continues online] **read ›**

Cyprian, *c. 248–258 AD · sources 25–28*

25 *Treatises* (on point 5) "forever, it is clear that those who partake of His body and receive the Eucharist by the right of communion are living. So, on the other hand, we must fear… [continues online] **read ›**

26 *Epistles* (1885 English; on point 3) "Corinthians 11:23-26 But if it is both enjoined by the Lord, and the same thing is confirmed and delivered by His apostle, that as often as we drink… [continues online] **read ›**

27 *Epistles* (1885 English; on point 3) "Corinthians 11:26 As often, therefore, as we offer the cup in commemoration of the Lord and of His passion, let us do what it is known the Lord did… [continues online] **read ›**

28 *Epistles* (on point 1) "Still, it was not in the morning, but after supper, that the… [continues online] **read ›**

Apostolic Constitutions, *c. 250–380 AD · source 29*

29 *Apostolic Constitutions* when they go through such things, do they refuse to pray, or to touch a Bible, or to receive the Eucharist? If they admit that they do, then it is… [continues online] **read ›**

THE BIBLE *3 verses, The Faith Once Delivered Bible (Old Testament from the Septuagint), in Bible order*

30 **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 ›**

31 **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 ›**

32 **1 Corinthians 11:26** For as often as you eat this bread and drink this cup, you proclaim the Lord's death until he comes. **read ›**

ALSO LINKED BY THF TO THESE PASSAGES *35 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

Psalms 23:1

Isaiah 40:11 · 55:1

Ezekiel 34:13

Malachi 1:10

Matthew 5:45 · 6:32 · 6:33 · 6:34 · 7:9 · 15:26 · 19:4 · 26:26 · 26:29

Mark 7:27 · 14:25

Luke 11:5 · 11:11 · 12:16 · 12:29 · 22:19

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John 6:33 · 6:35 · 14:16 · 15:1

Romans 2:14

1 Corinthians 2:6 · 10:16 · 11:23 · 12:12 · 13:12

Colossians 1:14 · 1:15

2 Timothy 2:1

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

ABOUT THIS STUDY

A THF member asked “What did the early church believe about Communion?” on May 2, 2026. The Historic Faith answered it as a public study on November 9, 2026.

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THE END OF THIS STUDY