THE QUESTION

What did the early church say Communion does for our salvation?

Asked by a THF member on May 2, 2026 · published November 9, 2026 · 11 numbered quotations · the 21 early Christian passages and 66 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-say-communion-does-for-our-salvation

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

The early writers tied Communion closely to salvation. They taught that it gives life, forgiveness of sins and the hope of resurrection, and that it joins believers to Christ. They also warned that being cut off from it is dangerous, and they kept it for the baptized who lived as Christ taught.

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.

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POINT 1 OF 7

Jesus promised life to those who eat

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

Tatian's gospel harmony gives Jesus' own words from John 6. He links eating his body and drinking his blood with eternal life, with being raised on the last day, and with living in him. The early writers below build on these words.

1

"Whoever eats of my body and drinks of my blood has eternal life, and I will raise him up on the last day."

later in the same passage

"Whoever eats my body and drinks my blood remains in me, and I in him."

EARLY CHRISTIAN WRITER **Tatian,** *Diatessaron* 19 (c. 150–180 AD) **Source 7, page 7** Read it in the library ›

THF's updated English

POINT 2 OF 7

It was given for forgiveness and everlasting life

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

An early liturgy says the holy gifts are given to the faithful for the forgiveness of sins and everlasting life. Irenaeus says the same: after the Holy Spirit is called down on the bread and cup, those who receive them obtain forgiveness and eternal life.

2

"Oh, taste and see that the Lord is good; He is shared out and not divided, given to the faithful and not used up, for the forgiveness of sins and everlasting life, now and always, and forever."

EARLY CHRISTIAN WRITER **Early Liturgies,** *Divine Liturgy of St. James* 1 (c. 200–400 AD) **Source 14, page 7** Read it in the library ›

THF's updated English

3

"Then, after perfecting the offering, we invoke the Holy Spirit, so that He may make this sacrifice—both the bread as the body of Christ and the cup as the blood of Christ—so that those who receive these symbols may obtain forgiveness of sins and eternal life."

EARLY CHRISTIAN WRITER **Irenaeus,** *Fragments from the Lost Writings of Irenæus* (c. 175–202 AD) **Source 8, page 7** Read it in the library ›

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POINT 3 OF 7

Cyprian called it the food of salvation

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

Cyprian reads the Lord's Prayer as asking for Christ, the bread of life, each day. He calls the Eucharist the food of salvation and warns that a person kept back from Communion because of grave sin is separated from Christ's body and in danger of being far from salvation.

4

> “And we ask that this bread should be given to us daily, so that we who are in Christ, and who receive the Eucharist daily as the food of salvation, may not, because of the interruption caused by some grave sin, be prevented—being kept back and not communicating—from sharing in the heavenly bread, and so be separated from Christ’s body, as He Himself foretells and warns: “I am the bread of life which came down from heaven. If any man eats of my bread, he shall live forever; and the bread which I will give is my flesh, for the life of the world.””
>
> *later in the same passage*
>
> “So, on the other hand, we must fear and pray lest anyone who is kept from communion, and is separated from Christ’s body, should remain far from salvation, as He Himself threatens and says, “Unless you eat the flesh of the Son of man, and drink His blood, you shall have no life in you.””

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

Source 20, page 7 **Read it in the library ›**

POINT 4 OF 7

It gives our bodies hope of resurrection

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

Irenaeus argues that the flesh fed with the Lord's body and blood will not stay in corruption. He compares our bodies to a grain of wheat that falls into the earth and rises, as a sign that those nourished by the Eucharist will be raised.

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5 “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 10, page 7** Read it in the library ›
THF's updated English

6 “so also our bodies, being nourished by it, and laid in the earth, and decomposing there, shall rise at their appointed time”

EARLY CHRISTIAN WRITER **Irenaeus,** *Against Heresies: Book V* (c. 175–202 AD) **Source 9, page 7** Read it in the library ›
THF's updated English

POINT 5 OF 7

It joins believers to Christ

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

An early liturgy repeats Jesus' promise that the one who eats abides in him and passes from death to life. Clement of Alexandria compares Christ's flesh to bread that takes in wine, as a picture of how Christ draws heavenly people to himself and feeds them for immortality.

7 “everyone who eats My body and drinks My blood abides in Me, and I in him, and I will raise him up on the last day; and he does not come into judgment, but I will make him pass from death to eternal life.””

EARLY CHRISTIAN WRITER **Early Liturgies,** *Liturgy of Adaeus and Maris* 1 (c. 200–400 AD) **Source 13, page 7** Read it in the library ›
THF's updated English

8 “That is, it takes in those among men who are heavenly, nourishing them to immortality, and leaves only the desires of the flesh for destruction.”

EARLY CHRISTIAN WRITER **Clement of Alexandria,** *Instructor* 1.6 (c. 190–215 AD) **Source 12, page 7** Read it in the library ›
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POINT 6 OF 7

Rejecting it was seen as deadly

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

Ignatius writes about people who stayed away from the Eucharist because they denied it was Christ's flesh. He warns that speaking against this gift brings death, and says they would do better to honor it so that they might rise again.

9 “Those, therefore, who speak against this gift of God, bring upon themselves death in the midst of their disputes. Yet it would be better for them to treat it with respect, so that they might also rise again.”

EARLY CHRISTIAN WRITER **Ignatius of Antioch,** *Epistle to the Smyrnaeans* (c. 98–117 AD) **Source 3, page 6** Read it in the library ›
THF's updated English

POINT 7 OF 7

It was for the baptized who obeyed Christ

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

Communion was not open to everyone. Justin says only those who believe, have been baptized for the remission of sins, and live as Christ taught may take part. The Didache likewise allows only the baptized to eat and drink.

10 “This 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, and live as Christ instructed, are allowed to partake.”

EARLY CHRISTIAN WRITER **Justin Martyr,** *First Apology* (c. 130–165 AD) **Source 4, page 6** Read it in the library ›
THF's updated English

11 “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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THE LIMITS

What these passages don't tell us

- These passages do not explain exactly how Communion works alongside faith, repentance and baptism in a person's salvation.
- They do not settle later debates about how the bread and wine become Christ's body and blood.
- 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 21 early Christian passages and 66 Bible verses we kept for this question (repeats and weak or off-topic search hits were left out): early Christian passages first (sources 1–21, grouped by writer, earliest first), then Bible verses in The Faith Once Delivered Bible (sources 22–25, in Bible order), then 62 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 *21 passages from 11 writers*

Didache, *c. 50–120 AD · source 1*

1 *Teaching of the Twelve Apostles* 9 **Quote 11, 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 · sources 2–3*

2 *Epistle to the Philadelphians* (1885 English; on point 5) "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 ›**

3 *Epistle to the Smyrnaeans* **Quote 9, page 5** 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 4–5*

4 *First Apology* (1885 English) **Quote 10, page 5** "this food is called among us [the Eucharist], of which no one is allowed to partake but the man who believes that the things which we teach are true, and… [continues online] **read ›**

5 *Dialogue with Trypho* 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 ›**

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Tatian, *c. 150–180 AD · sources 6–7*

6 *Diatessaron* 19 (on point 1) 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 ›**

7 *Diatessaron* 19 (1885 English) **Quote 1, page 2** “6:54 Whosoever eats of my body and drinks of my blood 49 has eternal life… [continues online] **read ›**

Irenaeus, *c. 175–202 AD · sources 8–11*

8 *Fragments from the Lost Writings of Irenæus* (1885 English) **Quote 3, page 2** “in this respect it is pure. For we make an oblation to God of the bread and the cup of blessing, giving Him thanks in that He has commanded the… [continues online] **read ›**

9 *Against Heresies: Book V* **Quote 6, page 4** 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 ›**

10 *Against Heresies: Book IV* **Quote 5, page 4** 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 ›**

11 *Against Heresies: Book V* (1885 English; on point 4) “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 ›**

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

12 *Instructor* 1.6 **Quote 8, page 4** 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 ›**

Early Liturgies, *c. 200–400 AD · sources 13–16*

13 *Liturgy of Adaeus and Maris* 1 (1885 English) **Quote 7, page 4** “He Himself who blessed us with all spiritual blessings in the heavens, through Jesus Christ our Lord, and prepared us for His kingdom, and called us to the desirable good… [continues online] **read ›**

14 *Divine Liturgy of St. James* 1 (1885 English) **Quote 2, page 2** “the remission of sins, and the life everlasting; now and always, and forever… [continues online] **read ›**

15 *Divine Liturgy of St. James* 1 (1885 English; on point 2) “the remission of sins and life everlasting… [continues online] **read ›**

16 *Divine Liturgy of St. Mark* 1 (1885 English) “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 ›**

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

17 *Commentary on John* 6 (on point 1) 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 “we have a symbol of gratitude to God in the bread… [continues online] **read ›**

Gregory Thaumaturgus, *c. 240–270 AD · source 19*

19 *Twelve Topics on the Faith* 1 (1885 English; on point 1) “6:55 and, He that eats my flesh, and drinks my blood, has eternal life? John 6:56… [continues online] **read ›**

Cyprian, *c. 248–258 AD · source 20*

20 *Treatises* **Quote 4, page 3** “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 ›**

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Apostolic Constitutions, *c. 250–380 AD · source 21*

21 *Apostolic Constitutions* (on point 2) of the new covenant. Take of it, and eat. This is my body, which is broken for many, for the remission of sins." In the same way, He also took… [continues online] **read ›**

THE BIBLE *4 verses, The Faith Once Delivered Bible (Old Testament from the Septuagint), in Bible order*

22 **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 ›**

23 **John 6:56** He who eats my flesh and drinks my blood remains in me, and I in him. **read ›**

24 **1 Corinthians 15:53** For this corruptible must put on incorruption, and this mortal must put on immortality. **read ›**

25 **Ephesians 5:30** because we are members of his body, of his flesh and bones. **read ›**

ALSO LINKED BY THF TO THESE PASSAGES *62 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

Isaiah 40:11 · 55:1

Ezekiel 34:13

Malachi 1:10

Matthew 1:1 · 1:18 · 5:45 · 11:27 · 12:31 · 18:12 · 26:24 · 26:29 · 26:39

Mark 14:22 · 14:25

Luke 7:43 · 10:22 · 12:50 · 16:9 · 22:19 · 24:39

John 1:18 · 4:1 · 5:8 · 6:32 · 6:33 · 6:53 · 6:55 · 8:42 · 10:17 · 14:2 · 14:16 · 15:1

Acts 8:20

Romans 6:23 · 11:16 · 11:32

1 Corinthians 2:6 · 2:15 · 10:16 · 11:23 · 12:4 · 15:8 · 15:36

2 Corinthians 2:17 · 4:4 · 12:3 · 12:9

Galatians 1:1

Ephesians 1:10

Philippians 4:17

Colossians 1:14

1 Timothy 2:2

1 Peter 2:5 · 2:9

1 John 4:1 · 5:8

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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 say Communion does for our salvation?” 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