

BAPTIST FAITH AND MESSAGE 2000

Article VII – Baptism and the Lord's Supper

Christian baptism is the immersion of a believer in water in the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit. It is an act of obedience symbolizing the believer's faith in a crucified, buried, and risen Saviour, the believer's death to sin, the burial of the old life, and the resurrection to walk in newness of life in Christ Jesus. It is a testimony to his faith in the final resurrection of the dead. Being a church ordinance, it is prerequisite to the privileges of church membership and to the Lord's Supper.

The Lord's Supper is a symbolic act of obedience whereby members of the church, through partaking of the bread and the fruit of the vine, memorialize the death of the Redeemer and anticipate His second coming.

WHAT DO THE SCRIPTURES SAY ABOUT THE BAPTISM AND THE LORD'S SUPPER?

1) Two Ordinances

First let's talk about the term "ordinances." We sometimes see these things referred to as "sacraments." Originally the term sacraments came from the Latin word "sacramentum", which simply meant an oath of loyalty. This was used to describe the loyalty oath given by Roman soldiers to their commanding officers, for example. If this is the sense of the word we are using, then it could be acceptable. However, it has been commonly used in Roman Catholic circles as a word that describes an act that bestows saving grace on an individual. This is not what we want to convey, so historically we have shied away from the term sacraments and have used the term ordinances. (It removes some of the baggage and confusion that can come with a loaded term like sacrament.) Simply put, we believe that these are the things that Christ has ordained, or commanded, his church to do.

As Protestants, we believe that there are two ordinances or commands instituted by Christ – baptism and the Lord's Supper. In Catholicism, there are seven sacraments. These are: Baptism, Confirmation, the Eucharist (Lord's Supper), penance, matrimony, holy orders (setting aside bishop, priest, or deacon), and extreme unction (last rites).

- Why do we believe that there are only two ordinances?
- Why do we reject the other 5 as ordinances?
- What are the qualification for something to be an ordinance?

These have historically been defined by two criteria. (1) They are ordinances if they have been directly instituted by Christ, and (2) if they are directly related to the gospel.¹ Both

¹Blount, Douglas, Baptist Faith and Message 2000 (Rowman and Littlefield, Lanham, 2007), 72.

baptism and the Lord's Supper meet this criteria, and they are the only two of these discussed that do so.

Matthew 28:16-20

*[16] Now the eleven disciples went to Galilee, to the mountain to which Jesus had directed them. [17] And when they saw him they worshiped him, but some doubted. [18] And Jesus came and said to them, "All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. [19] Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, **baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit**, [20] teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you. And behold, I am with you always, to the end of the age."*

Luke 22:19

*[19] And he took bread, and when he had given thanks, he broke it and gave it to them, saying, "This is my body, which is given for you. **Do this in remembrance of me.**"*

The ordinances, as we will see, are given to the church. As such, the proper setting for each of these is with the gathered church. This is not necessarily a church building, but it is the local assembly of God's people. As such, the proper setting for these ordinances is not our family gathering, our home Bible study, or our group of friends. It is shown in the scriptures as something typically and normally performed in the gathered church. We'll talk more about this in detail in each section.

2) Believer's Baptism

As Baptists, one of our distinguishing characteristics is our insistence on believer's baptism. The article states, "**Christian baptism is the immersion of a believer in water in the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit. It is an act of obedience symbolizing the believer's faith in a crucified, buried, and risen Saviour, the believer's death to sin, the burial of the old life, and the resurrection to walk in newness of life in Christ Jesus. It is a testimony to his faith in the final resurrection of the dead. Being a church ordinance, it is prerequisite to the privileges of church membership and to the Lord's Supper.**"

a. Baptism is for Believers

Through the pages of the New Testament, we see that it is those who have believed that are baptized. We are never told of an individual who is baptized apart from faith in Christ. It is always after they have heard the gospel, repented of their sin, and turned in faith to Christ. It almost always immediately follows the conversion, with one notable exception (thief on the cross.) An argument for baptism of infants incapable of faith is an argument from silence.

Acts 16:25-34

[25] About midnight Paul and Silas were praying and singing hymns to God, and the prisoners were listening to them, [26] and suddenly there was a great earthquake, so that the foundations of the prison were shaken. And immediately all the doors were opened, and

everyone's bonds were unfastened. [27] When the jailer woke and saw that the prison doors were open, he drew his sword and was about to kill himself, supposing that the prisoners had escaped. [28] But Paul cried with a loud voice, "Do not harm yourself, for we are all here." [29] And the jailer called for lights and rushed in, and trembling with fear he fell down before Paul and Silas. [30] Then he brought them out and said, "Sirs, what must I do to be saved?" [31] And they said, **"Believe in the Lord Jesus, and you will be saved, you and your household."** [32] **And they spoke the word of the Lord to him and to all who were in his house.** [33] And he took them the same hour of the night and washed their wounds; and **he was baptized at once, he and all his family.** [34] Then he brought them up into his house and set food before them. And he rejoiced along with his entire household that he had believed in God.

The word of God was preached, the gospel was believed, and they were baptized. There is no evidence from the text that there were infants present. However, there is evidence that the gospel was preached to the whole household and it is by this word that faith was granted to the household.

Acts 8:26-40

[26] Now an angel of the Lord said to Philip, "Rise and go toward the south to the road that goes down from Jerusalem to Gaza." This is a desert place. [27] And he rose and went. And there was an Ethiopian, a eunuch, a court official of Candace, queen of the Ethiopians, who was in charge of all her treasure. He had come to Jerusalem to worship [28] and was returning, seated in his chariot, and he was reading the prophet Isaiah. [29] And the Spirit said to Philip, "Go over and join this chariot." [30] So Philip ran to him and heard him reading Isaiah the prophet and asked, "Do you understand what you are reading?" [31] And he said, "How can I, unless someone guides me?" And he invited Philip to come up and sit with him. [32] Now the passage of the Scripture that he was reading was this:

"Like a sheep he was led to the slaughter and like a lamb before its shearer is silent, so he opens not his mouth. [33] In his humiliation justice was denied him. Who can describe his generation? For his life is taken away from the earth."

[34] And the eunuch said to Philip, "About whom, I ask you, does the prophet say this, about himself or about someone else?" [35] **Then Philip opened his mouth, and beginning with this Scripture he told him the good news about Jesus.** [36] And as they were going along the road they came to some water, and the eunuch said, "See, here is water! What prevents me from being baptized?" [38] **And he commanded the chariot to stop, and they both went down into the water, Philip and the eunuch, and he baptized him.** [39] And when they came up out of the water, the Spirit of the Lord carried Philip away, and the eunuch saw him no more, and went on his way rejoicing. [40] But Philip found himself at Azotus, and as he passed through he preached the gospel to all the towns until he came to Caesarea.

Again, we see baptism immediately following faith in Christ.

- What constitutes a credible profession of faith? How should we determine who is allowed to be baptized in our church?

b. Baptism is by Immersion

Whenever we see baptism described in the Bible, we see that it is described as a person immersed in water. This is why we believe that this is the proper and normative mode of baptism.

Matthew 3:13-17

*[13] Then Jesus came from Galilee to the Jordan to John, to be baptized by him. [14] John would have prevented him, saying, "I need to be baptized by you, and do you come to me?" [15] But Jesus answered him, "Let it be so now, for thus it is fitting for us to fulfill all righteousness." Then he consented. [16] And when Jesus was baptized, **immediately he went up from the water**, and behold, the heavens were opened to him, and he saw the Spirit of God descending like a dove and coming to rest on him; [17] and behold, a voice from heaven said, "This is my beloved Son, with whom I am well pleased."*

Mark 1:9-11

*[9] In those days Jesus came from Nazareth of Galilee and was baptized by John in the Jordan. [10] And **when he came up out of the water**, immediately he saw the heavens being torn open and the Spirit descending on him like a dove. [11] And a voice came from heaven, "You are my beloved Son; with you I am well pleased."*

Luke 3:21-22

[21] Now when all the people were baptized, and when Jesus also had been baptized and was praying, the heavens were opened, [22] and the Holy Spirit descended on him in bodily form, like a dove; and a voice came from heaven, "You are my beloved Son; with you I am well pleased."

John 3:22-24

*[22] After this Jesus and his disciples went into the Judean countryside, and he remained there with them and was baptizing. [23] John also was baptizing at Aenon near Salim, **because water was plentiful there**, and people were coming and being baptized [24] (for John had not yet been put in prison).*

- What does baptism by immersion portray that we lose if we baptize by sprinkling water?

Though John's baptism was a baptism of repentance and not exactly the same as Christian baptism we see today, we still see some continuity there. Israel was repenting of their sin and going through this ceremonial washing, and we see some of this same symbolism today in baptism. By immersion, we are showing a couple of things. First, your old life of sin is buried, and you emerge from the water to walk in newness of life with our resurrected Lord. Second, it is a wonderful picture of our sin being washed away in the baptismal waters as we are forgiven by the grace of God. This is lost if we administer baptism by the sprinkling of water.

c. Baptism is the Entrance into the Church

Christian baptism is portrayed in the New Testament as the official, public entrance of a believer into the church. The gospel is preached, an individual is granted repentance and faith, and is baptized into the church.

Acts 2:37-41

[37] Now when they heard this they were cut to the heart, and said to Peter and the rest of the apostles, "Brothers, what shall we do?" [38] And Peter said to them, "Repent and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins, and you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit. [39] For the promise is for you and for your children and for all who are far off, everyone whom the Lord our God calls to himself." [40] And with many other words he bore witness and continued to exhort them, saying, "Save yourselves from this crooked generation." [41] So those who received his word were baptized, and there were added that day about three thousand souls.

Some traditions have used confirmation as an entrance into the church. Others have turned "walking the aisle and praying the sinner's prayer" as the public affirmation of salvation. Certainly religiously training our children is commanded, and certainly when God saves us this should result in us crying out to him in prayer, but neither of these things is the public and official induction into the people of God. We see in the New Testament people repent, believe, and immediately get baptized into the church. We do not see saving faith described in the New Testament without public believer's baptism. While this is not what saves us, it is an act that always follows true saving faith.

- Our church requires believer's baptism prior to entrance into church membership. Why might some see this as counter-cultural? What would you say to them?

d. Baptism Symbolizes Death to Sin and Newness of Life

When we are baptized into the church, it is saying something to the world. We are publically identifying with our crucified and risen Lord, and we are identifying with his church. This identification is symbolized in two ways. We are buried in water, dead to our old life, and raised from the water, alive in Christ. We are also showing the washing away of sin in water. And this ordinance is done as we publically proclaim that Christ is Lord. It is not done apart from the word, and the affirmation of our faith in this proclamation.

Romans 6:1-11

*[1] What shall we say then? Are we to continue in sin that grace may abound? [2] By no means! How can we who died to sin still live in it? [3] **Do you not know that all of us who have been baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into his death?** [4] **We were buried therefore with him by baptism into death, in order that, just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, we too might walk in newness of life.***

[5] For if we have been united with him in a death like his, we shall certainly be united with him in a resurrection like his. [6] We know that our old self was crucified with him in order that the body of sin might be brought to nothing, so that we would no longer be enslaved to sin. [7] For one who has died has been set free from sin. [8] Now if we have died with Christ, we believe that we will also live with him. [9] We know that Christ, being raised

*from the dead, will never die again; death no longer has dominion over him. [10] For the death he died he died to sin, once for all, but the life he lives he lives to God. [11] **So you also must consider yourselves dead to sin and alive to God in Christ Jesus.***

Colossians 2:8-15

*[8] See to it that no one takes you captive by philosophy and empty deceit, according to human tradition, according to the elemental spirits of the world, and not according to Christ. [9] For in him the whole fullness of deity dwells bodily, [10] and you have been filled in him, who is the head of all rule and authority. [11] **In him also you were circumcised with a circumcision made without hands, by putting off the body of the flesh, by the circumcision of Christ, [12] having been buried with him in baptism, in which you were also raised with him through faith in the powerful working of God, who raised him from the dead. [13] And you, who were dead in your trespasses and the uncircumcision of your flesh, God made alive together with him, having forgiven us all our trespasses, [14] by canceling the record of debt that stood against us with its legal demands. This he set aside, nailing it to the cross. [15] He disarmed the rulers and authorities and put them to open shame, by triumphing over them in him.***

- Many have used this verse in Colossians as warrant for connecting circumcision with baptism? Is baptism the New Covenant circumcision? Why or why not?

3) Lord's Supper

For good reason, we see then that the Lord's Supper follows baptism in this article. It says, **"The Lord's Supper is a symbolic act of obedience whereby members of the church, through partaking of the bread and the fruit of the vine, memorialize the death of the Redeemer and anticipate His second coming."**

a. Lord's Supper is for Baptized Believers

It follows that if baptism is our entrance into the church, our public identification with her and all of the rites that are included, then communion is an ordinance observed by members of the church – those who have been baptized into the body of Christ. It is worth noting that all Christian tradition agrees on this point. Though we may disagree on who can be baptized and how it is to be performed, communion is to be celebrated by those who are inside the Church. When the New Testament describes who breaks bread together, it always is talking about the gathered church.

Acts 20:7

[7] On the first day of the week, when we were gathered together to break bread, Paul talked with them, intending to depart on the next day, and he prolonged his speech until midnight.

- What are the requirements that we set forward at Crossway for who can participate in the Lord's Supper? Why?
- Does this seem harsh to you? Why or why not?

b. Lord's Supper is a Remembrance

When this ordinance was instituted by Christ, it was put forward as a remembrance. He was commemorating his sacrificial death for his people. We are instructed to do this in remembrance of him until he comes again.

Matthew 26:26-29

[26] Now as they were eating, Jesus took bread, and after blessing it broke it and gave it to the disciples, and said, "Take, eat; this is my body." [27] And he took a cup, and when he had given thanks he gave it to them, saying, "Drink of it, all of you, [28] for this is my blood of the covenant, which is poured out for many for the forgiveness of sins. [29] I tell you I will not drink again of this fruit of the vine until that day when I drink it new with you in my Father's kingdom."

Mark 14:22-26

[22] And as they were eating, he took bread, and after blessing it broke it and gave it to them, and said, "Take; this is my body." [23] And he took a cup, and when he had given thanks he gave it to them, and they all drank of it. [24] And he said to them, "This is my blood of the covenant, which is poured out for many. [25] Truly, I say to you, I will not drink again of the fruit of the vine until that day when I drink it new in the kingdom of God."

Luke 22:14-23

[14] And when the hour came, he reclined at table, and the apostles with him. [15] And he said to them, "I have earnestly desired to eat this Passover with you before I suffer. [16] For I tell you I will not eat it until it is fulfilled in the kingdom of God." [17] And he took a cup, and when he had given thanks he said, "Take this, and divide it among yourselves. [18] For I tell you that from now on I will not drink of the fruit of the vine until the kingdom of God comes." [19] And he took bread, and when he had given thanks, he broke it and gave it to them, saying, "This is my body, which is given for you. Do this in remembrance of me." [20] And likewise the cup after they had eaten, saying, "This cup that is poured out for you is the new covenant in my blood. [21] But behold, the hand of him who betrays me is with me on the table. [22] For the Son of Man goes as it has been determined, but woe to that man by whom he is betrayed!" [23] And they began to question one another, which of them it could be who was going to do this."

Because it is a remembrance, we do not believe that there is anything magical about the elements themselves. We do not think that the elements literally become the body and blood of Christ (transubstantiation). This Catholic view is a misreading of the phrase "this is my body," and results in a superstitious treatment of the meal. Luther rejected this literal interpretation of this phrase, citing that re-crucifies Christ each time, it bestows some miraculous power on the priest to bring this about, and it provides the recipient grace apart from faith. However, Luther was not entirely correct in his view either. His view (consubstantiation) saw the presence of Christ "in, with, and under" the elements. He believed the presence of Christ was not metaphysically in the elements, but was in some way tied to the meal as well. He famously debated another reformer Ulrich Zwingli, where Zwingli argued that when Christ said "this is my body," he was saying "this signifies my body." He showed where this type of phrasing is used elsewhere in scripture, and he is

certainly correct. We do not believe that the substance is the body of Christ, but rather according to the words of our Lord we believe this is done in remembrance of him.

- Why is it important that we recognize this is a remembrance rather than participating with the actual elements of the body of Christ?
- Can communion be administered apart from the preached Word of God?

c. **Lord's Supper is Taken in Unity**

Paul writes to the church in Corinth regarding their practices at the Lord's Supper. In it, we get a clear picture that the meal is to be taken with the whole church, and this is to be done in unity with one another.

1 Corinthians 10:14-17

*[14] Therefore, my beloved, flee from idolatry. [15] I speak as to sensible people; judge for yourselves what I say. [16] **The cup of blessing that we bless, is it not a participation in the blood of Christ? The bread that we break, is it not a participation in the body of Christ?** [17] **Because there is one bread, we who are many are one body, for we all partake of the one bread.***

1 Corinthians 11:17-34

[17] But in the following instructions I do not commend you, because when you come together it is not for the better but for the worse. [18] For, in the first place, when you come together as a church, I hear that there are divisions among you. And I believe it in part, [19] for there must be factions among you in order that those who are genuine among you may be recognized. [20] When you come together, it is not the Lord's supper that you eat. [21] For in eating, each one goes ahead with his own meal. One goes hungry, another gets drunk. [22] What! Do you not have houses to eat and drink in? Or do you despise the church of God and humiliate those who have nothing? What shall I say to you? Shall I commend you in this? No, I will not.

[23] For I received from the Lord what I also delivered to you, that the Lord Jesus on the night when he was betrayed took bread, [24] and when he had given thanks, he broke it, and said, "This is my body, which is for you. Do this in remembrance of me." [25] In the same way also he took the cup, after supper, saying, "This cup is the new covenant in my blood. Do this, as often as you drink it, in remembrance of me." [26] For as often as you eat this bread and drink the cup, you proclaim the Lord's death until he comes.

[27] Whoever, therefore, eats the bread or drinks the cup of the Lord in an unworthy manner will be guilty concerning the body and blood of the Lord. [28] Let a person examine himself, then, and so eat of the bread and drink of the cup. [29] For anyone who eats and drinks without discerning the body eats and drinks judgment on himself. [30] That is why many of you are weak and ill, and some have died. [31] But if we judged ourselves truly, we would not be judged. [32] But when we are judged by the Lord, we are disciplined so that we may not be condemned along with the world.

[33] So then, my brothers, when you come together to eat, wait for one another—[34] if anyone is hungry, let him eat at home—so that when you come together it will not be for judgment. About the other things I will give directions when I come.

- What types of things should we examine in ourselves prior to taking communion?
- Why is it important for us to have unity with one another before we partake in the meal?

HOW SHOULD I RESPOND?

A) What difference does this make in my life? How should my life look because of these truths?

B) What changes do I need to make because of these truths?

C) How can I share these truths with family, friends, or neighbors?

HOMEWORK

For next week, read Article 8 and all of the associated scriptures with this article.