

Part 2: The Lord's Supper

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 Savior, 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.

Matthew 3:13-17; 26:26-30; 28:19-20; Mark 1:9-11; 14:22-26; Luke 3:21-22; 22:19-20; John 3:23; Acts 2:41-42; 8:35-39; 16:30-33; 20:7; Romans 6:3-5; 1 Corinthians 10:16,21; 11:23-29; Colossians 2:12.

Key Text:

Baptism

Matthew 28:18-20: And Jesus came and spoke to them, saying, "All authority has been given to Me in heaven and on earth. Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all things that I have commanded you; and lo, I am with you always, *even to the end of the age.*" Amen.

Acts 2: 41-42: Then those who gladly received his word were baptized; and that day about three thousand souls were added *to them*. And they continued steadfastly in the apostles' doctrine and fellowship, in the breaking of bread, and in prayers.

Romans 6:3-5: Or do you not know that as many of us as were baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into His death? Therefore we were buried with Him through baptism into death, that just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life.

For if we have been united together in the likeness of His death, certainly we also shall be *in the likeness* of His resurrection.

Colossians 2:12: buried with Him in baptism, in which you also were raised with *Him* through faith in the working of God, who raised Him from the dead.

Lord's Supper

Luke 22:19-20: And He took bread, gave thanks and broke *it*, and gave *it* to them, saying, "This is My body which is given for you; do this in remembrance of Me." Likewise He also *took* the cup after supper, saying, "This cup *is* the new covenant in My blood, which is shed for you.

Acts 20:7: Now on the first *day* of the week, when the disciples came together to break bread, Paul, ready to depart the next day, spoke to them and continued his message until midnight.

1 Corinthians 11:23-29: For I received from the Lord that which I also delivered to you: that the Lord Jesus on the *same* night in which He was betrayed took bread; and when He had given thanks, He broke *it* and said, "Take, eat; this is My body which is broken for you; do this in remembrance of Me." In the same manner *He* also *took* the cup after supper, saying, "This cup is the new covenant in My blood. This do, as often as you drink *it*, in remembrance of Me." For as often as you eat this bread and drink this cup, you proclaim the Lord's death till He comes. Therefore whoever eats this bread or drinks *this* cup of the Lord in an unworthy manner will be guilty of the body and blood of the Lord. But let a man examine himself, and so let him eat of the bread and drink of the cup. For he who eats and drinks in an unworthy manner eats and drinks judgment to himself, not discerning the Lord's body.

The *BF&M* speaks of baptism and the Lord's Supper as ordinances. What is an ordinance? As noted in our previous study an ordinance is an act: 1) commanded by the Lord Jesus in the Gospels and given by him for his followers to practice (Matt 26:17-30; Mark 14:12-26; Luke 22:7-23); 2) passed on as a tradition by Jesus' authorized agents, the apostles, in the letters to the churches (1 Cor 10:14-22; 11:17-34); 3) practiced by the early church in the history of the church recorded in Acts (2:42, 46; 20:7, 11) and 4) that pictures the atoning work of our Savior. Thus only baptism and the Lord's Supper can be considered ordinances of the Christian church. Foot washing (John 13) pictures cleansing but not sacrifice and death.

Baptism dramatically pictures our entering into covenant relationship with God through Jesus Christ. The Lord's Supper portrays our continuing in this relationship.

Various designations have been used for the Lord's Supper by different churches due to the fact that the act is referred to in a variety of ways in the New Testament. These designations include: 1) breaking of bread (Acts 2:42; 20:7; 1 Cor 10:16); 2) communion (1 Cor 10:16); 3) Eucharist (from the Greek word for giving thanks, cf. Matt 26:27; Mark 14:23; Luke 22:17, 19; 1 Cor 11:24); 4) the Lord's Supper (1 Cor 11:20); and 5) the Lord's table (1 Cor 10:21).

The accounts in the Gospels show that the Christian ceremony of the Lord's Supper has its roots in the Jewish Passover festival. This festival was a ceremony observed by the Jewish people to remind them of the Exodus – that awesome event when the Lord rescued them from 400 years of degradation and slavery in Egypt (see Ex. 12).

Through great miracles and displays of power, Yahweh brought them out of Egypt, rescued them from the cruel oppression of Pharaoh and brought them into a land they could call their own. Although by definition the Exodus was a non-repeatable event, its significance was preserved for future generations of Israelites by the institution of the ceremony of the Feast of Passover (Ex 12:24-27), celebrated every year at the Spring Equinox.

Just before Jesus was betrayed and handed over to the rulers to be crucified, he celebrated this "freedom meal" with his 12 disciples. As he did so, he turned the symbolism of the meal in a new direction.

He used the Passover festival to act out in symbolic drama the meaning of his coming death at the hands of the Jewish and Roman rulers. The unleavened bread and the wine were no longer symbols of deliverance from slavery in Egypt, but pictured him as the Passover Lamb

(John 1:29) sacrificed so that his people might be delivered from slavery to sin and death. As the leader of a “New Exodus,” he instituted a new ceremony to commemorate it.

Insights From I Cor 11:17-34

The most full and detailed explanation of the Lord’s Supper is given by the Apostle Paul in his first letter to the Corinthians (11:17-34). It wonderfully helps us to understand the meaning of the Lord’s Supper. His explanation of the Lord’s Supper reveals six major themes.

1. Saving Sacrifice (This is my body):

On the night Jesus was arrested and betrayed he broke bread. And as he was doing so, he said, “This is my body which is being given for you.”

The bread represents the death of Jesus for His people. The Apostle Peter says, “For Christ died for sins once for all, the righteous for the unrighteous, to bring you to God” (1 Pet 3:18). Christ died in our place. He was the Passover Lamb who was sacrificed to avert the messenger of death so that we might have life. This is the tradition handed down by Paul in the words, “This is my body which is given for you.”

2. Covenant (This is my blood):

God had made a covenant with his people at Mount Sinai when he brought them out of Egypt. A relationship of love, loyalty and trust had been established. He would be their God, and they would be his people.

This covenant relationship, initiated by sacrifice, had been broken by the people. They had not been faithful to the agreement; they had not followed God’s standards for the relationship.

The death of Jesus thru the shedding of his blood initiates a New Covenant by a better sacrifice – one that does not need to be repeated. The New Covenant (see Jere.

31:31-34; Heb 8:1-13) is a better agreement because now, not only God, but also his people, will be able to keep the agreement.

The cup represents the fact that Jesus shed his blood in death and died to pay the penalty due unto us for our sins. Through trust in him and in his death for us we are forgiven and completely pardoned. It speaks of a covenant relationship with God in which he says, “I will be your God, and you shall be my people.”

3. Commemoration (Do this in remembrance of me):

Some Christians believe that when the minister or priest pronounces the words, “This is my body” and “This is my blood,” the bread actually becomes the literal body of Christ, and the wine actually becomes the literal blood of Christ. This is the view of the Roman Catholic Church. This teaching, known as transubstantiation, is a misunderstanding of the text for four reasons:

- 1) The words “this is my body” and “this is my blood” clearly are to be understood figuratively. If Jesus had meant that the wine becomes his blood, why didn’t he use the word “become”? This is exactly what we have in John 2 when Jesus and his mother were at the wedding in Cana, and the text says that the water became wine. Further, Jesus was right there when he voiced these words. It is highly unlikely the disciples would have taken them in any literal sense.
- 2) Second, the Lord’s Supper has its origins in the Jewish Passover. This feast was a memorial – a reminder of the Exodus by the use of symbols.
- 3) Third, the festivals in the pagan religions at this time were also symbolic. It would have required a clear explanation if the Lord’s Supper was to be taken literally.

4) Fourth, Jesus said, “do this in remembrance of me.” He said this carefully. He said it twice. We eat bread and drink wine as a reminder, not as the literal or real thing.

The Lord’s Supper is not a new offering of Christ’s sacrifice. It is a remembering of the one sacrifice for sin, done once for all (Heb 9:28).

Furthermore, there is no idea presented that by a physical participation of the bread and the wine a person receives saving grace from God. We receive saving grace by faith, by putting our trust in Jesus Christ.

4. Participation (Community):

Paul says that the Lord’s Supper is a teaching given by Christ and handed on to you (v. 23 plural). The commands “to eat” and “to drink” are in the plural (v. 26). So, this instruction is given to a community, a community of believers, those who are the followers of Jesus.

The covenant binding us to God through the death of Jesus creates a community. By participating in the communal meal, we are bound not only to the Lord Jesus, but also to one another. We enjoy fellowship with Christ in a deep and mysterious way when we come to His table (1 Cor 10:14-21).

5. Expectation (Future hope):

Paul commands the Corinthians to continue this ceremony until the Lord Jesus comes. The celebration is one of hope – certain hope. Jesus Christ will return to this earth bodily and physically. The supper celebrates this truth.

6. Proclamation (Evangelism):

Finally, Paul says that by performing this ceremony, we proclaim the death of the Lord Jesus. The Lord’s Supper dramatizes in symbolic fashion the central facts of the

Christian faith and announces these facts to all who observe. In a very simple way, those who do not belong to Jesus can see and understand through these simple actions that the Lord Jesus gave his life for us.

Since the Lord's Supper is an expression of continuing in the faith, it follows logically that only baptized believers should participate. By eating the bread and drinking the cup, we are identifying with Jesus Christ as Lord. We are saying that when he died, he died for my sins. When he poured out his blood, it was His sacrificial death which initiated a New Covenant – a new relationship between us and the Creator God.

We must recognize or distinguish the body of the Lord. By participating in this celebration, we enjoy deep fellowship with the Lord Jesus. Paul says that just as those who participate in pagan religious festivals are actually participating with demonic spirit, so those who belong to Jesus and who participate are actually involved in deep spiritual participation with Jesus Christ.

We must examine and judge ourselves. The ceremony is a way of saying, "I am continuing in my relationship with Jesus Christ." If our behavior is contrary to our confession, we are lying.

If we don't examine our lives, acknowledge our sins and turn from them, we will be disciplined by the Lord. But, we should not abstain from the Supper. We must examine ourselves, repent and then participate (v. 28).

Some Additional Theological Considerations For Reflection

- 1) Nathan Finn of Southeastern Seminary well says, "Baptism represents our initial union with Christ at conversion, the Lord's Supper represents our ongoing identity with the Savior as his committed followers" ("Baptism as a Prerequisite of the Lord's

- Supper,” www.baptisttheology.org). Baptism and the Lord’s Supper are related ordinances. The Great Commission sets forth the pattern of baptism preceding teachings about the Lord’s command (Lord’s Supper). In Acts 2:41-42, baptism preceded the devotion to “breaking of bread,” a likely reference to the Lord’s Supper.
- 2) The *BF&M* affirms the local church as the contextual prerequisite for the Lord’s Supper, in its statement, being a church ordinance...”. The Lord’s Supper is a corporate act of the body of Christ. Paul affirmed the corporate nature of the Lord’s Supper by his fivefold use of the phrase “come together” (1 Cor. 11:17, 18, 20, 33, 34). The one loaf of the Supper portrays the unity of the church (1 Cor. 10:17). Paul admonished the Corinthian believers to partake of the Supper only after properly recognizing the body of Christ (1 Cor. 11:29). A convention meeting, a home Bible study, a wedding, or a family gathering are not the proper contexts for the observance of the Lord’s Supper.
 - 3) The *BF&M* highlights obedience as an aspect of the theological meaning of the Supper. Jesus commanded the disciples, “do this...(1 Cor. 11:24,25). The nature of the Supper, as an act of obedience, prompts the question, “how frequently should the Supper be observed?” The Bible does not contain specific guidelines, but frequent observance is the correct answer.
 - 4) The Lord’s Supper is not a gloomy memorial of a dead, departed teacher. *In Biblical Foundations for Baptist Churches: A Contemporary Ecclesiology*, John Hammett, a professor at Southeastern Seminary, writes that “remembrance” is “recalling an event with such vividness and power that it affects the present, bringing all the benefits of Christ’s death to bear....” By participation in the Lord’s Supper, disciples remember

the most important event in cosmic history, and thereby, proclaim through dramatic symbols the Lord's death.

Views on the Lord's Supper		
View	Christ and the Elements	Significance
Transubstantiation (Roman Catholic)	Bread and wine literally change into the body and blood of Christ.	Recipient partakes of Christ, who is being sacrificed again in the Mass to atone for sins.
Consubstantiation (Lutheran)	Bread and wine contain the body and blood of Christ but do not literally change. Christ is actually present "in, with, and under" the elements.	Recipient receives forgiveness of sins and confirmation of one's faith through partaking of the elements, but they must be received through faith.
Spiritual Presence (Presbyterian, Reformed, some Baptist)	Christ is not literally present in the elements but there is a spiritual presence of Christ.	Recipient receives grace through partaking of the elements (or experience the presence of Christ through the ordinance).
Memorial (Baptist, Mennonite)	Christ is not present physically or spiritually in the elements.	Recipient commemorates the death of Christ.