

WATER BAPTISM AND THE LORD'S SUPPER

The Bible teaches that there are two ordinances which we as Christians are to observe--Baptism and the Lord's Supper. The Lord Jesus commanded us to observe them both after becoming believers. Baptism is performed once, as soon after conversion as possible. The Lord's Supper is observed repeatedly.

I. WATER BAPTISM

A. HISTORY OF BAPTISM IN THE NEW TESTAMENT 1. JOHN THE BAPTIST BAPTIZED

John baptized for repentance. (Matthew 3:11; Acts 19:4) **2.**

JESUS WAS BAPTIZED

Jesus at the age of 30 began His ministry by submitting to John's baptism. (Luke 3:21-23)

3. DISCIPLES WERE BAPTIZED

Jesus, through His disciples, baptized new disciples. (Jn. 4:1,2)

4. JESUS COMMANDED BAPTISM

Jesus commanded that all believers be baptized: *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.* (Matthew 28:19)

5. EARLY CHURCH BELIEVERS WERE BAPTIZED

The early church baptized new believers *in the name of Jesus Christ.* (Acts 2:38; 10:48; 19:5) (See also Acts 8:12; 16:15; 18:8).

B. SIGNIFICANCE OF BAPTISM 1. DEFINITION

The word *baptize* (Greek *baptizo*) means to cover wholly with a fluid, to immerse, submerge. Baptism is Scripturally performed by complete immersion in water. (Matthew 3:16; Acts 8:38,39)

2. BAPTISM IS A SYMBOL

Baptism pictures the following:

a) CHRIST'S DEATH, BURIAL, AND

RESURRECTION FOR US

Baptism signifies Christ's death, burial, and resurrection, which atoned for sins, and removed the power and penalty of sin.

b) OUR DEATH, BURIAL, AND RESURRECTION

Baptism by immersion pictures our death to sin and the old way of life. Our being raised from the water demonstrates our resurrection to a new spiritual life. (Read Romans 6:3-5; Galatians 3:27; Colossians 3:3) The water also signifies the washing away of sin, and the new birth, resulting from repenting and believing in Christ.

c) OUR UNION WITH CHRIST

Baptism is our testimony to others that we have given ourselves to Jesus Christ. (Colossians 2:12)

3. BAPTISM IS ONLY A SYMBOL

Baptism is only a symbol or representation of an inward working of God. We must avoid the erroneous doctrine of "baptismal regeneration", which sets forth two false teachings:

a) THE ERROR OF INFANT BAPTISM

A child who is baptized does not receive new life, nor membership in Christ's Church. The Bible teaches that baptism is for believers who have faith in Jesus' salvation. There is no infant baptism found in the Bible, nor in the early Church, until about A.D. 200.

b) THE ERROR OF REGENERATION BY BAPTISM

Baptism has no saving power. A soul is regenerated, born again, by faith in Jesus alone. To require baptism for salvation is to require our work in addition to Christ's work on the cross. Paul said: *For by grace you have been saved through faith, and that not of yourselves; it is the gift of God, not of works, lest anyone should boast.* (Eph. 2:8,9)

II. THE LORD'S SUPPER

The Lord's Supper is the second ordinance for the believer after receiving salvation. The purpose of it is to remember Christ and His sacrificial death for us. (Luke 22:19,20) This rite is called *the Lord's Supper* (1 Corinthians 11:20), *communion* (1 Corinthians 10:16), *the Lord's table* (1 Corinthians 10:21), and *to break bread*. (Acts 2:42)

A HISTORY OF THE LORD'S SUPPER

1. JESUS INSTITUTED THE LORD'S SUPPER

Jesus instituted the Lord's Supper with His disciples at the Passover meal the evening before He was crucified. (Matthew 26:26-30)

2. EARLY CHURCH BELIEVERS OBSERVED THE LORD'S SUPPER

The apostles and other believers in the early church *continued steadfastly. . .in the breaking of bread.* (Acts 2:42)

B. SIGNIFICANCE OF THE LORD'S SUPPER

1. THE LORD'S SUPPER IS A SYMBOL

The Lord's Supper was established by Jesus so that we would remember Him and the price He paid by dying for our sins, sorrows, sicknesses, poverty, and broken relationships. This is pictured by the use of two emblems. He said to partake of them "in remembrance of Me."

a) THE BREAD

The broken bread signifies the Body of the Lord Jesus in which He lived, suffered, and died. At the Last Supper Jesus took bread, broke it, and said to His disciples, *Take eat; this is My*

body which is broken for you; do this in remembrance of Me. (1 Corinthians 11:24)

b) THE FRUIT OF THE VINE

The fruit of the vine represents the blood of Jesus, shed on the cross for the remission of sins. At the end of the Last Supper, Jesus took the cup and said, *This cup is the new covenant in My blood. This do, as often as you drink it, in remembrance of Me. (1 Cor. 11:25)*

2. THE LORD'S SUPPER IS ONLY A SYMBOL

The Lord's Supper is only symbolic of Christ's sacrifice for us. The bread and the wine are not actually the body and the blood, but only representative of them. They serve as tangible reminders of the costly sacrifice of Jesus for our salvation and healing, and act as catalysts for releasing our faith to appropriate that salvation and healing.

a) THE ERROR OF TRANSUBSTANTIATION

Before A.D. 300 the unscriptural teaching of transubstantiation crept into the Church. The rite was called the *Eucharist* in some churches, from the word meaning *prayer of thanksgiving*. In the Roman mass today it is still believed that when the

priest offers the prayer of thanksgiving, the elements become the actual body and blood of Christ. It is also believed that by partaking of the elements, one can cause the sins of the living and the dead to be forgiven. The Bible teaches, however, that Christ cannot be sacrificed repeatedly for our sins. Paul said,

For the death that He died, He died to sin once for all. (Romans 6:10) It is wrong to think that we need to or even can crucify Christ repeatedly by partaking of the elements.

b) THE ERROR OF CONSUBSTANTIATION

The Lutheran Church believes in the erroneous doctrine of consubstantiation. This teaching claims that the body and blood of Christ are mysteriously and supernaturally united with the bread and the cup, so that they are received when the elements are.

3. THE LORD'S SUPPER IS FOR FELLOWSHIP

The Lord's Supper is a time for drawing close to Jesus and to other members of the Body of Christ. As we remember with thanksgiving Jesus' costly sacrifice for our sins and their consequences, we are drawn into rich fellowship with Him (1Corinthians 10:16). We also experience a richness of fellowship with our brothers and sisters in Christ who are celebrating the Lord's Supper with us. (1Cor. 10:17)

4. THE LORD'S SUPPER IS FOR HEALING

The Lord's Supper commemorates the death of Jesus for our sins, and their consequences, such as sorrow, sickness, poverty, and strife. His death is the fulfillment of the Passover, observed by the Jews for their deliverance from bondage in Egypt. In fact, Jesus instituted the Lord's supper during the Passover meal with His disciples. The two elements of the bread and the fruit of the vine correspond to the lamb and the blood in the Passover, and they speak of two distinct benefits accomplished by Jesus' death for the believer.

a) THE BREAD

The broken bread represents the body of Jesus. It is the fulfillment of the type (symbol) in the Passover meal, the lamb. John the Baptist referred to Jesus as, *The Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world!* (John 1:29) Paul states, *For indeed Christ, our Passover, was sacrificed for us* (1 Corinthians 5:7). The lamb was eaten by the

Israelites for their bodily health and strength, to undertake the journey ahead in the wilderness. (Exodus 12:8) So, Jesus' body was beaten, whipped, and bruised for our physical healing. (Isaiah 53:4,5,10; Matthew 8:16,17; 1 Peter 2:24) As we partake of the bread and look to Jesus as our Healer, we receive healing for our physical bodies.

b) THE FRUIT OF THE VINE

The fruit of the vine represents Jesus' blood, shed for our sins. His blood is the fulfillment of the type (symbol) in the Passover, the blood of the lamb. The lamb's blood was put on the two doorposts and lintel of the Israelites' houses to provide spiritual deliverance for the firstborn, the representative of the whole family, through the forgiveness of sins and the sparing of life. As we partake of the cup and look to Jesus as our Savior, we receive spiritual deliverance, through the forgiveness of sin and sparing of life, as well as incentive for holiness. As the lamb's body and blood were for both physical and spiritual healing, so Jesus' body and blood were for both our physical and spiritual healing.

C. PREPARATION FOR THE LORD'S SUPPER

In 1 Corinthians 11, Paul tells us we must do four things before partaking of communion:

1. EXAMINE OURSELVES (Vs. 27, 28)

We must examine ourselves for unconfessed sins.

2. DISCERN THE LORD'S BODY (Vs.29, 30)

Partaking of the Lord's Supper unworthily may bring judgment on us, such as sickness, or premature death, for failure to discern *the Lord's body* . To discern Christ's body may refer to treating other believers with love and respect. It may also mean to recognize and appropriate by faith physical healing, because of the beatings given to Jesus, for *by His stripes we are healed* (Isaiah. 53:5).

3. JUDGE OURSELVES (V.31)

We must judge any sins, so that God will not judge them.

4. CONFESS OUR SINS

If we have sinned, we must confess our sins, knowing that, *If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.* (1 John 1:9)