

Church Ordinances

Baptism

According to Matthew 28:18-20, what two commands did Jesus give His disciples to do after they were to “make disciples”?

1. _____
2. _____

Baptism and **teaching** were commands from the Lord. Baptism is not an option! It is the first act of obedience for every believer. Teaching then follows as well. It is completely foreign to the Lord that a disciple would “get saved” and not learn and grow. Being a lifetime learner is as much a part of the Christian life as baptism.

In response to the people’s question, “What shall we do?” in Acts 2:38 Peter lays out the initial elements of the Christian life. List them:

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____

Luke 13:3 says, I tell you, *Nay: but, except ye repent, ye shall all likewise perish. Repentance (which involves believing and a desire to change), baptism, and the presence of the Holy Spirit in a person’s life are all a part of the beginnings of the Christian life.*

Read the following Scriptures:

- | | |
|---------------|--------------|
| Acts 2:41 | Acts 8:12-13 |
| Acts 16:29-34 | Acts 18:8 |

What always came before baptism?

Baptism always follows believing. Infant baptism is nowhere in the Scriptures! Roman Catholics believe that infant baptism takes away original sin but there is no Scripture that teaches it. Other denominations, Presbyterians for example, believe in infant baptism followed by Confirmation at the age of accountability, about 12. The concept is that in Confirmation they confirm their baptism and election by God and learn the basic concepts of the Christian life. There is no Scriptural basis for such a practice.

We believe in **believer’s baptism**.

Read the following Scriptures:

John 3:23 Matthew 3:16 Acts 8:34-38 Mark 1:4-5

In what was each baptized? _____

Water was used in all these Scriptures when someone was baptized. The Greek word used in each case is *baptidzo*. In its original first century definition, *baptidzo* meant to immerse, submerge, or completely cover. In Acts 8 we have Philip coming up out of the water, and in John 3:23, John the Baptist is baptizing people in a specific area because there was much water there. There would be no need for much water if he were sprinkling or pouring water.

The word baptism is a transliteration of the Greek word *baptidzo*. Transliteration simply means that the original Greek letters were converted into English letters to make a new word. Regarding the meaning of *baptidzo*, the majority of scholars and Greek lexicons agree that it always means immersion, or to submerge.

*We practice **believer's baptism by immersion.***

Water baptism openly identifies us with Christ. Jesus said in Matthew 10:33, *But whosoever shall deny me before men, him will I also deny before my Father which is in heaven.*

Someone who is unwilling to be baptized is denying Jesus. Baptism is a public declaration of a person's commitment to Christ.

Read the following Scriptures:

Romans 6:1-7 Colossians 2:11-12

Water baptism openly identifies us with Christ in His...

1. _____

2. _____

We identify with Christ's **death** and **resurrection**. In Romans 6:4 (last part) our new life is identified with His life. We are to live a life in the power of His life. In other words, our life should reflect His character.

Just as a wedding ring is an outward sign that a couple is married, so in water baptism we are publicly identifying our commitment to Christ. What if a couple were to simply wear wedding rings without actually being married? They would only have an empty symbol not the **substance**. So baptism, the wedding ring of the Bride of Christ, doesn't make anyone the bride. It is a fitting **outward sign**, but without the inner reality of salvation, it is void of meaning.

*We practice **believer's baptism by immersion**
as an outward sign of an inward work.*

Acts 8:36 states, *As they (Philip and the eunuch) traveled along the road, they came to some water and the eunuch said, "Look, here is water. Why shouldn't I be baptized?"*

The eunuch wanted to follow Jesus in believer's baptism. He had placed his faith in Christ and wanted to make a public expression of his new-found faith.

When were you baptized? _____ (*at least a rough guess*)

If you have not, ask your Pastor or mentor when you can follow Christ's command to be baptized.

The Lord's Supper

Read the following Scriptures:

Matthew 26:17-30

Mark 14:12-26

Luke 22:7-23

In each case Jesus commanded the disciples to observe the Lord's Supper after He was gone. Each reenactment of the Supper is considered an **Ordinance** (*defined as a decree or command*) of the Church. It is **not** a **sacrament**. By sacrament churches mean that grace is received in doing the specific act. We do not believe any grace is passed to the believer by observing the Lord's Supper. When you received Christ as your Savior you received the Holy Spirit into your life. You received all of Him then. There is no longer any receiving of Him like Roman Catholics believe in the sacrament of the Lord's Supper.

Ordinances are **symbolic** acts that set forth primary facts of the Christian faith and are obligatory for all who believe in Jesus Christ. Baptism dramatically pictures our entering into covenant relationship with God through Jesus Christ by faith, and the Lord's Supper portrays our continuing in this relationship.

Roman Catholic view: Transubstantiation

Transubstantiation means there is a change of the substance of the bread and wine into the Body and Blood of Christ in the Eucharist. However, the believer does not sense any change in the substance of the bread and wine. Catholics understand the Lord's Supper as a sacrament in which the partaker actually receives Christ. We believe you receive Christ by faith when you are saved not in the Eucharist (Lord's Supper).

Lutheran view: Consubstantiation or Real Presence

Consubstantiation means that Christ is present with the bread and wine of the Lord's Supper as the believer receives it. This is also considered a sacrament.

Baptist view: Memorialism

Memorialism means the bread and cup that symbolize the broken body and shed blood offered by Christ remind us today of God's great love for us. While the Lord is present in a spiritual sense, blessing and encouraging, He does not enter the believer in the taking of the Lord's Supper. We are commanded to remember His death for us.

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)
5. The Lord's table (1 Cor 10:20).

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.

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 beautiful 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 (Exodus 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 a 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 picture Him as the Passover Lamb 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.

Read 1 Corinthians 11:17-26

There are six themes revealed in these verses:

1. ***Saving sacrifice.*** This is my body. (1 Corinthians 11:24)

In the Lord's Supper the Passover bread, without yeast, and the sacrificial lamb are combined by Christ into a single meaning that He is our Passover Lamb sacrificed for us.

2. ***Covenant.*** This is my blood. (1 Corinthians 11:25)

In the Old Testament God entered into a covenant with Israel at Mount Sinai. So in the New Testament, God enters into a new covenant by a better sacrifice, the blood of Jesus. The cup represents the fact that Jesus died to pay the penalty due unto us for our sins, and that 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. (1 Corinthians 11:26)

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.

4. **Participation.** Community. (1 Corinthians 11:23)

Paul says that the Lord's Supper is teaching given by Christ and handed on to you. The "you" here and the commands "to eat" and "to drink" (v. 26) are all in the plural (meaning all of you as a group). So, this instruction is given to a community, a community of believers, those who are the followers of Jesus. It is always understood as a community event.

5. **Expectation.** Future hope. (1 Corinthians 11:26)

We are commanded to observe the Lord's Supper until the Lord Jesus comes back. We expect Him to return!

6. **Proclamation.** Evangelism. (1 Corinthians 11:26)

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.

Preparation for taking the Lord's Supper

1. Only for baptized believers.

Since the Lord's Supper is an expression of continuing in the faith, it follows that only baptized believers should participate. We do not practice closed communion, (only for local church members). It is, however, only open to baptized believers.

2. Examine and judge yourself.

1 Corinthians 11:28-31. *A man ought to examine himself before he eats of the bread and drinks of the cup. For anyone who eats and drinks without recognizing the body of the Lord eats and drinks judgment on himself. That is why many among you are weak and sick, and a number of you have fallen asleep. But if we judged ourselves, we would not come under judgment.*

Paul says that some are sick, while others sleep (are dead) because they did not judge themselves before taking the Lord's Supper! This is a serious matter.

3. Proper preparation.

- a. **Ask the Lord to reveal any sin in your life.** Psalm 139:23-24, *Search me, O God, and know my heart: try me, and know my thoughts: and see if there be any wicked way in me, and lead me in the way everlasting.*
- b. **Confess them, and ask the Lord to cleanse you.** Claim 1 John 1:9, *If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just and will forgive us our sins and purify us from all unrighteousness.*
- c. **Make any restitution needed.** Matthew 5:24, *Leave your gift there in front of the altar. First go and be reconciled to your brother; then come and offer your gift.* Correct anything possible that the Lord reveals to you. Let Him lead you in this.

- d. ***Focus your mind on the Lord***, no one or nothing else. Hebrews 12:2, *Let us fix our eyes on Jesus, the author and perfecter of our faith, who for the joy set before him endured the cross, scorning its shame, and sat down at the right hand of the throne of God.*

We celebrate the Lord's Supper four times a year. This keeps it from becoming a ritual and allows you the opportunity to remember Christ's sacrifice in a special way. We use a wafer instead of bread because the bread used by Jesus was unleavened (*without yeast*). While Jesus did use wine, we use grape juice to keep from it becoming a problem. It is still the fruit of the vine as Jesus said. In 1869 Thomas Bramwell Welch, a strong supporter of the temperance movement, produced a non-alcoholic wine (grape juice) to be used for church services in his hometown of Vineland, New Jersey.

The Lord's Supper is a very special celebration in Church. It is done in community with our eyes and hearts focused on Jesus.