



CHURCH - Why Baptism & Communion?

While most people in America have some sort of familiarity with baptism and communion, many people don't know *WHY* these traditions exist. Today we discover what the Bible says about both of these significant practices.

MY NOTES

Why Baptism?

Jesus told His disciples to make disciples and baptism was part of that process.

Matthew 28:19-20 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 everything I have commanded you. And remember, I am with you always, to the end of the age."

To baptize **in the name of the Father, Son, & Spirit** is to baptize by God's authority and for His glory. A person is baptized in obedience to the ONE TRUE, TRIUNE GOD (not by the authority of a celebrated leader or by a particular church denomination).

Baptism was the practice of the early church. Where it happened didn't really matter, but somewhere along the way people shifted the focus from **WHY baptism to...WHERE** baptism should take place. Many groups say it must happen in their buildings. But this wasn't the case of the early church. Outside of mentioning the Jordan River, no specific body of water is mentioned for baptism in the New Testament. One passage in Acts simply says,

Acts 8:36-38 * verse 37 is not found in earliest Greek manuscripts

³⁶ As they were traveling down the road, they came to some water. The eunuch said, "Look, **there's water**. What would keep me from being baptized?" ³⁸ So he ordered the chariot to stop, and both Philip and the eunuch **went down into the water, and he baptized him.**

Philip didn't say, "*Nope. This place won't do. We must go to the Jordan*" or point the Ethiopian man to a religious building.

Baptism was the practice of the early church, but once again, somewhere along the way, people began shift the focus to **HOW & WHEN** baptism should be practiced. Some baptize or 'christen' children by sprinkling with water. Sometimes adults are sprinkled. Some churches even discourage baptism to adults who have been sprinkled as infants.

🕒 **The Greek word *baptizo*, from where we get baptize, means 'to dip in or under'. It was a secular term used in dying clothes and bathing.**¹

Even though the word means to IMMERSE or DIP UNDER, some still think of baptism as sprinkling or infant "*Christening*".

Protestant churches, including Methodists, Presbyterians, who practice infant baptism do NOT believe the person is saved from their sin until they repent and trust Jesus.² Therefore, from a biblical perspective, they are not "in the family of God" until that point.

The founders of denominations agree:

- **Martin Luther** (Lutherans): "*baptism...a symbol of death and resurrection. For this reason I could wish that the baptized should be totally immersed, according to the meaning of the word and the signification of the mystery.*"³
- **John Calvin** (Presbyterians): "*...it is evident that the term baptize means to immerse, and that this was the form used by the primitive Church.*"⁴
- **John Wesley** (Methodist): "*We are buried with him - Alluding to the ancient manner of baptizing by immersion.*"⁵

¹ Gerhard Kittel, Gerhard Friedrich and Geoffrey William Bromiley, *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament* (Grand Rapids, MI: W.B. Eerdmans, 1985), 92.

² <http://www.umc.org/what-we-believe/does-baptism-mean-that-i-am-saved>

³ Martin Luther, "The Babylonian Captivity" (http://pdf.amazingdiscoveries.org/eBooks/BABYLONIAN_CAPTIVITY_OF_THE_CHURCH.pdf)

⁴ John Calvin, *Institutes of the Christian Religion* (Bellingham, WA: Logos Bible Software, 1997), IV. ch. XV. Par. 19.

⁵ John Wesley notes on Romans 6:4 (<http://biblestudyfiles.com/03%20-%20Study%20Notes%20&%20Guidelines/John%20Wesley%20-%20Notes%20on%20the%20Entire%20Bible.pdf>)

Many Christians say that baptism should only occur *AFTER REPENTANCE OF SIN*. But some - like **Church of Christ** - go so far to say that BAPTISM saves you, that you don't have salvation until you are baptized. They point to Acts 2:38 and Mark 16:16 to make their point.

Acts 2:38-39 ³⁸ Peter replied, "Repent and **be baptized**, each 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, as many as the Lord our God will call."

This passage certainly points to the importance of baptism. There's no doubt that baptism was one of the first steps of obedience AFTER trusting Jesus and turning from sin (i.e. repentance).

Most folks in the **Church of Christ** are taught that you aren't saved UNTIL you are baptized. If you asked Jesus to forgive you and trusted He died for you, and died BEFORE you were baptized...you would go to Hell! One of the most often quoted verses by these folks is from the long ending of the gospel of Mark.

Mark 16:16 Whoever believes and **is baptized will be saved**, but whoever does not believe will be condemned. * The earliest manuscripts of Mark conclude with verse 16:8 and do not have this verse.

How should we respond?

- 1) **Followers of Jesus follow Jesus in baptism.** If you claim to follow Jesus, but refuse to obey Him in baptism, you are being DISOBEDIENT to the One you claim to follow.
- 2) **BELIEVING Jesus (turning from sin and turning to Him) saves and cleanses** - not baptism. Many more passages tells us to believe Jesus and don't mention baptism. For example:

John 3:18 Anyone who **believes in Him is not condemned**, but anyone who does not believe is already condemned, because he has not believed in the name of the one and only Son of God.

There is NOTHING about BAPTISM here. Later John gives his reason for writing:

John 20:31 But these are written so that you may **believe that Jesus is the Messiah**, the Son of God, and that **by believing you may have life in His Name**.

Where is BAPTISM? It isn't there, because **baptism doesn't save, BELIEVING Jesus does**. Those who BELIEVE Jesus will follow Him in baptism.

BIBLICAL BAPTISM IS ALWAYS BY IMMERSION SOON AFTER BELIEVING

Acts 18:8 Crispus, the leader of the synagogue, **believed in the Lord**, along with his whole household. Many of the Corinthians, when they heard, **believed and were baptized**.

Believing Jesus and obeying Jesus were tied together. There is no biblical example of a person believing Jesus and NOT quickly following Him in baptism.

◆ **WHO** should perform the baptism & **WHAT** does baptism do? Some think that only an ordained minister or priest can do the work of baptism, but this is not biblically true. Paul often had others baptize instead of him (1 Cor 1:14-16). Jesus didn't perform baptisms, but He had His disciples (fishermen & tax collectors) do it (John 4:2).

Romans 6:3-4 ³ Or are you unaware that all of us who were baptized into Christ Jesus were **baptized into his death**? ⁴ Therefore we were buried with him by baptism into death, in order that, just **as Christ was raised from the dead** by the glory of the Father, so **we too may walk in newness of life**.

This is what baptism symbolizes - death, burial, & resurrection - **New Life in Christ!**

The point is not **WHERE** you are baptized or **WHO** baptized you.

🕒 **Have you BELIEVED - turned from your sin and trusted Jesus?** If so, WHY won't you obey Him in baptism?

MY NOTES

Why Communion?

People with NO CHURH background would wonder why we might participate in what we call the Lord's Supper or Communion (both are NT phrases). In fact, non-Christians have often misunderstood Christian practices.

Christians often misunderstand Christian practices:

- Early Christians accused of atheism as they refused to worship Greek gods.
- Early Christians accused of treason as they refused to pledge allegiance to Caesar over Jesus.
- Early Christians accused of incest as they talked of loving each other as "brothers" and "sisters".⁶
- Early Christians accused of cannibalism as non-believers misunderstood the Christian communion language.

The first communion took place at an annual Passover meal, with a small group of Jesus' friends. Passover was normally celebrated with families, like a Thanksgiving meal for us. Here is the first Communion.

Luke 22:14-18 ¹⁴ When the hour came, he reclined at the table, and the apostles with him. ¹⁵ Then he said to them, "I have fervently desired to eat this Passover with you before I suffer. ¹⁶ For I tell you, I will not eat it again until it is fulfilled in the kingdom of God." ¹⁷ Then he took a cup, and **after giving thanks**, he said, "Take this and share it among yourselves. ¹⁸ For I tell you, from now on I will not drink of the fruit of the vine until the kingdom of God comes."

Some Christians refer to this meal as the **eucharist**. This word comes from the Greek for *thanksgiving*; it means, basically, 'the thank-you meal', and looks back to the many times when Jesus took bread, gave thanks for it, broke it, and gave it to people (e.g. Luke 24:30; John 6:11).⁷

Luke 22:19-20 ¹⁹ And he **took bread, gave thanks, broke it**, gave it to them, and said, "This is **my body, which is given for you**. Do this in remembrance of me." ²⁰ In the same way he also took the cup after supper and said, "This cup is the new covenant in my blood, which is poured out for you."

This is a memorial - a 'thank you' meal. This is NOT theological cannibalism. We are NOT to imagine chewing on Jesus' body nor drinking his blood. Cannibalism is forbidden in the OT (Lev 26:29; Deut 28:53-57).

However, hundreds of years after the early church first practiced this memorial, Roman Catholicism began to teach that one must approach a priest or bishop to receive the wafer & wine; that the priest has the authority of **transubstantiation** - to miraculously transfer the body & blood of Jesus is into the bread & juice. Consequently, the person literally receives the body and blood of Jesus every week. This is NOT what Jesus was referring to, as no NT passage teaches this.

Instead Jesus said, **do this in remembrance of Me**. Eating the bread and drinking the juice doesn't make us clean - it is a picture of what *DOES* make us clean - Jesus' death on the cross. HE is the payment is for our sin. This payment is what makes us right with God. This is the fulfillment of the 700 year old prophecy from Isaiah.

Isaiah 53:5-6 ⁵ But he was pierced because of our rebellion, crushed because of our iniquities; punishment for our peace was on him, and **we are healed by his wounds**. ⁶ We all went astray like sheep; we all have turned to our own way; and **the LORD has punished him for the iniquity of us all**.

Communion isn't just about the payment of Jesus, it's about the return of Jesus. Remember when Jesus talked about not eating or drinking this meal again "until the kingdom of God comes" (Lk 22:16,18)?

Communion celebrates past payment AND the future promise of Jesus.

leading Paul to write these words...

1 Corinthians 11:26

For as often as you eat this bread and drink the cup, **you proclaim the Lord's death until he comes**.

We must consider one more important aspect of Communion.

Communion is intended for Community.

- ◆NT Communion didn't happen in ROWS, it happened in CIRCLES. Not looking at the back of heads, but looking each other in the eyes.
- ◆NT Communion didn't happen in LARGE BUILDINGS, it happened in HOMES.

⁶ Robert James Dr. Utley, vol. Volume 2, *The Gospel According to Peter: Mark and I & II Peter*, Study Guide Commentary Series (Marshall, Texas: Bible Lessons International, 2000), 231.

⁷ Tom Wright, *John for Everyone, Part 1: Chapters 1-10* (London: Society for Promoting Christian Knowledge, 2004), 165.

Acts 2:46-47 ⁴⁶ Every day they devoted themselves to meeting together in the temple, and **broke bread from house to house**. They ate their food with joyful and sincere hearts, ⁴⁷ praising God and enjoying the favor of all the people. Every day the Lord added to their number those who were being saved.

NT Communion isn't between ME & God....*It's between _____ & God.*

Communion is intended for Community.

1. That's why we have been practicing Communion **more Frequently**.
2. And that's why we have been practicing Communion **more Intimately**.

We WANT YOU to have communion with your **Home Group, Bible Study**, and **your family** at least once a month. There is NO BIBLICAL mandate that communion be administered by a pastor.

🕒 **Church-wide communion on Dec 8 during our Holiday Meal during lunch-time** (bring covered dish)

3 QUESTIONS

1. Have you BELIEVED Jesus - turning sin and trusting in Him?
2. Have you obeyed Jesus in biblical baptism - immersion after belief?
3. Will you celebrate communion consistently in community?

* **Want to talk further?** Please contact **Jackie** (850-673-1582), **Justin** (704-618-6144), **Christy** (673-9764), or another follower of Jesus soon! Or call our **deacons & wives**: Tom & Martha Waddail, Steve & Debbie Bass, Freddy & Joyce Howard, Jere & Darlene Burnette, Alan & Christy Androski, Willy & Melissa Gamalero.