

Baptist Essentials – Why Are We Baptists?

Lesson 8 | Two Ordinances

Tonight, we find ourselves on the home stretch. Including tonight, good Lord willing, we will have three more parts to our series of Baptist Essentials. Tonight, we will evaluate the second T in Baptists.

The second T stands for **two ordinances.**

Now I understand, this is actually somewhat loaded, especially if you come from the Catholic Church. The Catholic Church would disagree with there being two and they would not say ordinances, they would call them sacraments. They believe there are 7 sacraments that fall into three categories. In category 1, entitled the sacraments of Christian initiation, include the sacraments of baptism, the eucharist, and confirmation. In category 2, entitled sacraments of healing, we find the sacraments of confession and the anointing of the sick. Finally, in category 3, called the sacraments of service, we find the sacraments of matrimony and holy orders. If you are a former Catholic, I may have unintentionally sent shivers down your spine. My apologies.

Now our evangelical brethren that believe that the Lord Jesus Christ initiated only 2 would still use the word “sacrament.” Those denominations would include our Presbyterian brothers, Lutherans, Methodists, and those inside the Episcopalian, or Anglican church.

Our vast majority of time this evening will be spent with me teaching about the two ordinances that we believe the New Testament prescribes, that being believer’s baptism and the Lord’s Supper. But before moving forward, we need to deal with the words ordinance and sacrament. I believe there is a BIG difference in the two and in how we must understand them.

ORDINANCES

The word sacrament can be understood in two different ways. The Catholic understanding is different than that of the protestant, or evangelical understanding.

Catholics believe that sacraments are efficacious signs of **grace by which divine life is dispensed and are **necessary** for salvation.¹**

Evangelicals who use the word sacrament believe them to be visible **signs God's invisible grace.**

Here's the bottom line, sacraments deal with God's grace, either a receiving of God's grace or a display of God's grace. As Baptists, we can most certainly agree that Baptism and the Lord's Supper are a display of God's grace. But we do not believe that the Scriptures teach us that we complete those two things just so we can see a visible sign of God's grace. Rather, we believe that the Scriptures command us to complete them.

That leads us to the word ordinance. **Ordinance means a **command** or an **authoritative order**.** Think back to the Great Commission. Jesus said told us to do something to disciples. What? To baptize them. Command. Imperative. Same thing with the Lord's Supper, Jesus took bread and broke it and said what? DO THIS in remembrance of Me. Again, command. Imperative. Authoritative order.

With that in mind, as Baptists, we believe there are two ordinances of the church. Let's first start with Believer's baptism.

The Practice of Believer's Baptism

Baptism is a public profession of faith which identifies them with Christ and serves as an entrance point into a local church. Baptism is not to be practiced upon an infant or young child who cannot demonstrate spiritual fruit of repentance, rather baptism is reserved only for those who have repented of their sin and placed their faith in Christ alone. We do not believe baptism saves you, but rather we believe baptism is a symbol of *already* being immersed in Christ through salvation.

That's what we believe about baptism. Let's break that down further. What exactly does baptism convey? What does baptism communicate?

1) Baptism identifies the believer as a **disciple of Jesus.**

¹ *The Catechism of the Catholic Church*, 2nd edition, p. 292-293

Those who are baptized have already been regenerated, or born again, prior to their baptism. The baptism was an outward indication of that faith that was presupposed of the baptism. Look at Acts 2 with me.

Acts 2:41a *So those who received his word were baptized.*

In this passage and all others like it, those being baptized give an outward expression of faith in Christ before baptism. In the New Testament, only those who personally profess faith in Christ are baptized. This truth on its face precludes infants from being baptized since infants are incapable of making a public profession of faith in Christ. Thus, only those who are baptized are those who have professed faith in Christ. We will talk more about infants here shortly.

Now there are some really big errors here as to what happens when somebody is baptized. Let's first think of the Roman Catholic understanding.

Roman Catholics would argue that baptism actually regenerates and makes someone a true Christian as well as a member of the universal church. They teach that it works *ex opere operato*. This means that the physical act of baptizing itself is what conveys grace on the one baptized, regardless of the intent or the beliefs of the person being baptized. Essentially, this sacrament is where the person is receiving grace from God and as they are baptized, they are having their original sin washed away. What do I mean by that? They are having their guilty status washed away. They are being regenerated.

Another erroneous understanding of baptism comes from our friends within the Stone-Campbell Movement, or you might know them better as the Church of Christ. They believe something that is called Baptismal Regeneration. **Baptismal Regeneration teaches that upon going under the baptismal waters, you have remission of sins.** Meaning, you must be baptized in order to be saved.

Clearly, this is an argument contrary to Scripture's teaching that it's by grace through faith in Christ that men are saved, and not by works. Sure, there are a few examples in the Bible that says believe and be baptized and you shall be saved, or something of the similar. Beloved, while time does not allow me to address every individual verse that our baptismal regeneration friends quote, let me encourage you to be a student of the Bible by using basic hermeneutical rules.

Basic hermeneutical rules:

Rule 1: Context is king.

Rule 2: Words have grammatical and historical meaning.

Rule 3: Allow the Scripture to interpret the Scripture.

Obviously there are additional rules to follow and even those rules go much deeper. But these are our three basic rules. What many folks do not follow is allowing the Bible to interpret the Bible. This is key, right? We take the hard to understand Scripture and read it in light of the easy to understand Scripture. We don't isolate a single verse without looking at it through the lens of the whole Bible.

Here's the bottom line: The New Testament is quite clear –God will save whom and when He chooses. Proceeding that salvation is baptism, which is a sign of regeneration, not the effectual cause of it.

There's much more to say here with this, but we need to move forward.

2) Baptism proclaims the believer's death to sin, self, Satan, and the world, and his resurrection to new life.

Turn with me to Romans 6.

***Romans 6:3-5** Do you not know that all of us who have been baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into his death? 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. 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.*

There is incredible symbolism that permeates baptism. It's the outward expression of the inward experience. I am proclaiming that I have died and went into the grave, which is the water. I then have been resurrected to new life in Christ as I come up out of the water. This symbolism is undoubtably the strongest way to express what Christ has done for a person in their regeneration.

Not only that but it proclaims my unification with Jesus. My death was His death. My resurrection to life is His resurrection to life. We will talk further about this here in just a moment.

3) Baptism identifies the believer with a **local church.**

We already read about in Acts 2 that all those who received His Word were baptized. But what happened after that? They were then added to the church. How many? About three thousand souls.

***Acts 2:41** So those who received his word were baptized, and there were added that day about three thousand souls.*

Words matter. Basic hermeneutical rule number 3. So let's ask about the words. Those who believe and were baptized, they were added to what? There was some type of list they were added to. So what list are we looking at here? The list of the local church.

4) Baptism is to be completed by **immersion and not by **sprinkling** or **pouring**.**

Here is where things really begin to get interesting and where we will spend a significant amount of time.

In every clear example of baptism the Bible gives us, the method, or "mode", of baptizing is the same. Believers are baptized by immersion. **The Greek word βαπτίζω (baptizo) means "to plunge, dip, or immerse something under water."**

Mark 1 indicates that after Jesus was baptized, "He *came up* out of the water" showing that there was so much water that He went into it. Or consider again the story of the Ethiopian official in **Acts 8:38-39**.

"As they traveled along the road, they came to some water and the eunuch said, 'Look, here is water. Why shouldn't I be baptized?' And he gave orders to stop the chariot. Then both Philip and the eunuch went down into the water and Philip baptized him. When they came up out of the water, the Spirit of the Lord suddenly took Philip away."

Two observations here: 1) We're told that the Ethiopian was on his way home from Jerusalem. Now surely if he was traveling from Judea to Africa he would have had water with him in his chariot. Certainly enough water to baptize by pouring would have been readily available. 2) There would have been no need for them to get out of the chariot and go "down into the water" if all Philip was going to do was take a handful of water and place it on his head.

Beyond such contextual indications, the symbolism of union with Christ in his death, burial and resurrection seems to require baptism by immersion. Baptism by sprinkling, or even pouring of water, does not supply the picture of resurrection that the Apostle expects from baptism. Baptism by immersion gives us a richer symbolism than just washing sins away. It describes going into the waters of judgment for our sin and being saved through Christ's death and resurrection (1 Peter 3:21). What our friends miss in their understanding of baptism is the symbolism that Paul teaches us. That symbolism being our unity with Christ. Infants are not, and cannot be, united with Christ. Thus, both contextual clues and apostolic statements on the symbolism of baptism lead us to conclude that baptism by immersion is the form that most fully preserves and accomplishes the meaning of baptism.

Now before we move forward, we need to define the **two methods of baptism**.

- **Credobaptists** practice baptizing those who are able to make a conscience profession of faith, ie. **believer's baptism**, by fully immersing the person under the water.
- **Paedobaptists** practice sprinkling infants with water or pouring water over those who make a profession of faith.

For our time tonight, we will zero in on infant baptism versus the Baptist understanding of baptism, that being believer's baptism. The next several things I will say here under the heading of baptism will either be heavily influenced or a direct quote from Pastor Fred Malone and his book, *The Baptism of Disciples Alone*². This book is one of the best books on this topic because, Pastor Fred Malone was a Baptist growing up, went to a Presbyterian seminary, converted to that

² Fred Malone. *The Baptism of Disciples Alone*.

denomination and was a Presbyterian pastor for several years. While pastoring a presbyterian church, his conscience was bothered by the doctrine of infant baptism. After working diligently to come to an understanding from the Bible and the Bible alone, he converted back to being a Baptist because of his belief of believer's baptism, which was shaped by the Scriptures alone. I highly recommend that you get this book for yourself if you're wanting to gain a deeper understanding of this topic of infant baptism.

The great Presbyterian theologian B.B. Warfield, once said, *"It is true that there is no express command to baptize infants in the New Testament, no express record of the baptism of infants, and no passages so stringently implying it that we must infer from them that infants were baptized."* The argument that Paedobaptists, like Warfield, put forth to defend their practice is that infant baptism is a "good and necessary inference" from the silence of Scripture on the matter.

Baptists and Presbyterians, whom I believe are most similar to historic Baptists, agree with a basic Augustinian principle of biblical interpretation that "the New is in the Old concealed; and the Old is in the New revealed." This places an emphasis upon the New Testament revelation as the final determiner of instituted and regulated Christian worship versus Old Testament worship and forms continued by unqualified inference alone (Ephesians 2:20; 3:5). This principle, consistently applied, **argues against** any notion of infant baptism grounded upon a supposed and possibly erroneous good and necessary inference, which may be neither "good" nor "necessary."

Baptists and Presbyterians both agree that there is no express command for or clear example of infant baptism in the Bible. Professor John Murray of Westminster Seminary, for example, admits that no command or example of infant baptism exists in the New Testament. Hence, his main principle of interpretation used to establish infant baptism is "good and necessary inference."

The evidence for infant baptism falls into the category of good and necessary inference, and it is therefore quite indefensible to demand that the evidence required must be in the category of express command or explicit instance.

As Baptists, and as Credobaptists, how do we defend what we believe? What are the objections that we are to use in our understanding that infant baptism, or Paedobaptism, is unbiblical? I'm going to give you four objections to infant baptism. There are several more that could be made so this list is not exhaustive.

Objections to Infant Baptism

1. The first objection is that **there is no command or clear case of infant baptism in the New Testament**. Any good Paedobaptist will agree to this. But, what they would argue for is a hermeneutic that is hard to really follow with them. They would say this— "Good and necessary inference can be deduced from the Scripture." For our Reformed friends who live and die by Sola Scriptura and what is called the Regulative Principle, essentially to say if the New Testament prescribes a certain element of worship, it is permitted, if the New Testament does not prescribe it, then it is prohibited, there is a crazy inconsistency that they live by. So for them, they say that infant baptism should be a regular part of the worship service but do so because they have inferred it from the Scriptures. Not only it that a contradiction to their hermeneutic, but it is also intellectually dishonest.

They would appeal to the different household baptisms that we find in the book of Acts. They would say that the whole household was baptized. Yes, and amen, it does say that. It was a description of what happened, and again using basic hermeneutics, we find that those people heard the word, believed the word, and then was baptized. It's consistent with all parts of Scripture, hear, believe, be baptized.

2. The second objection is that **the instances of baptism recorded in the New Testament "presuppose a credible and intelligent profession of faith" which infants cannot fulfill**. Every single time that somebody was baptized, it was based upon some type of profession of faith. Every. Single. Time. A profession of faith requires knowledge, a belief, and a full confident trust in the object of that faith. Question—are infants capable of doing this? Can an infant fully understand that they possess a sinful nature and that they are

doomed to hell and the only way to escape that punishment is to believe and trust that Jesus, who took on flesh and became a man, was humbled to death on a cross, endured the wrath of God and was made sin on behalf of all who would believe, died and was buried for three days, rose back to life so that we too could be raised? Can an infant believe that? Beloved, they simply just cannot.

Side note: what if infants die in infancy? Or they are aborted? What if they are still born or miscarried? I believe the Lord will save them by His grace through His grace because they are unable to profess their faith. How this works is beyond the scope of our topic this evening. But, bottom line, according to the Scriptures, babies go to heaven by grace alone through grace alone.

- 3. Baptism expresses the believer's identification with Christ and their regeneration.** With infant baptism, it is impossible to know if the child is regenerate. Beloved, when a person desires to be baptized, my job as their pastor is to interview his testimony and life to see if it is credible, right? I cannot baptize a known unbeliever, or a known make believer. To be fair to our Paedobaptist friends, while I am examining the testimony and life of a person for baptism, I cannot be 100% certain of their regeneration. Only God knows the heart, right? But I can certainly judge those fruits they are displaying. While this argument is truthful and Biblical, I do recognize it is easily refuted with my own argument. Nevertheless, it doesn't make it any less Biblical.
- 4. The next objection is that baptism is not the replacement of the Abrahamic mark of circumcision.** Let me explain here because you probably are not aware of one of the reasonings that the Paedobaptist argues for infant baptism. They would say that circumcision was given to the child of the Jew. Abraham was circumcised and all of his sons. Circumcision was a sign of nationality. The sign of the covenant was circumcision, the covenant being that God would give this people a land and that many people would populate it. Now, the Paedobaptist would say that there is continuity in the New

Covenant with the sign of baptism. There is a covenantal argument for this that is absolutely fragile. Let's think for a second, circumcision was given to who, boys or girls? Boys. Only boys. If baptism is the replacement sign, then there should be that consistency, right? Baptism should then be only for boys...but it's not. Baptism is given to both males and females.

The circumcision argument really does more than just confuse folks. In my honest opinion, I see this as more of an assault to the Gospel itself. Infant baptism welcomes these children into the church as circumcision welcomed that child into Judaism. The fallacy that comes with this is that because I was sprinkled as a baby, I now am part of the family of God despite the fact that I have yet to make a profession of faith. Beloved, how could that be anything less than undermining the Gospel itself and the requirement of that Gospel?

There is MUCH more to say here but, here's the bottom line— Circumcision and baptism are simply different.

So let's end our section in baptism with this question: If we know who should be baptized and why they should be baptized, what if they don't fall into those Biblical categories? Our question—who should be “rebaptized”?

The answer is easy yet has a few layers. If they haven't been immersed under the water, let's say you were baptized as a baby by sprinkling, then you're not Biblically baptized. What if you had water poured over you? Then you're not Biblically baptized. If you were baptized because you were taught that baptism was the final step of having remission of sin, then you're not Biblically baptized. And here's one that we did not talk about—what if you were baptized in a church where at the baptism they baptize you in the name of Jesus and NOT in all names of all three persons of God? This happens in the Oneness Pentecostal church. Then beloved, you're not Biblically baptized.

You should pursue Biblical baptism as stated and defined from what we have just discussed.

Moving ahead, let's turn our attention to the second ordinance of the church, that being the Lord's Supper.

The Lord's Supper

If baptism is the ordinance of initiation, given only once, the Lord's Supper is the ordinance of continuing fellowship with God, to be received over and over again.

The night before the Lord Jesus was crucified, He installed what we know as the Lord's Supper. It is a time when the church gathers and remembers the Gospel of the cross as well as the institution of the New Covenant. While baptism is a one-time event, partaking of the Lord's Supper is a continual event that should be observed for the entire life of the Christian until they go home to Glory.

As we partake of the elements of the bread and the cup, what is it doing for the believer?

1) The Lord's Supper leads us to worship by **remembrance.**

We think of the Gospel when we are taking the elements. We remember that Jesus did for us. We look to the cross and remember that Jesus became sin for us. We look to the object of our faith and know that He has imputed all of His righteousness to us, giving us His right standing. And we worship.

1 Corinthians 11:23-25 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, 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." 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."

2) The Lord's Supper produces healthy **self-evaluation in the believer's life.**

Before we eat and drink, we evaluate our lives. We look to see if there be any unrepentant sin in our lives. It's here that we confess our sins to the Lord. If we find ourselves living in unrepentant sin, we should allow the plate to pass and we not take the elements.

1 Corinthians 11:27-32 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. Let a person examine himself, then, and so eat of the bread and drink of the cup. For anyone who eats and drinks without discerning the body eats and drinks judgment on himself. That is why many of you are weak and ill, and some have died. But if we judged ourselves truly, we would not be judged. But when we are judged by the Lord, we are disciplined so that we may not be condemned along with the world.

3) The Lord's Supper leads us to worship in **anticipation.**

When we take the elements, it should bring our minds to heaven. It should bring our minds to the marriage supper of the Lamb.

Matthew 26:29 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.

I would say that every Catholic and Protestant would believe exactly what I just said. The major hang up, though, is the question: How is Christ Present in the Lord's Supper?

When speaking of the Lord's Supper, there have been different views about Christ's relation to His Supper. The words "This is my body" are perhaps the four most disputed words in the Bible. It all depends on what the meaning of the word "is" is. The word "is" can indicate identity, attribute, cause, resemblance, or fulfillment.³

With respect to Christ's presence in the Lord's Supper the debate is between those who argue that "is" means identity and those who assert that "is" means resemblance. Before we consider the three main views, let me just give a quick contrast how the word "is" used in identity and symbolic resemblance:

³ Taken from D.A. Carson, [Exegetical Fallacies](#).

Identity: This “is” my tounge.

Symbolic Resemblance: James 3:6, “The tongue ‘is’ a fire.”

That short English lesson is going to be vital in helping us consider the different views put forth for the elements in the Lord’s Supper:

Transubstantiation – Roman Catholics teach this view, which asserts that **the bread and wine *actually become* in their essence the body and blood of Christ**. At the moment in the mass when the priest says, “this is my body,” the bread becomes the literal, physical body of Christ though they still appear to be bread and wine. For them, ‘is’ implies identity, and so they understand the Lord’s Supper to be a physical re-presentation of the sacrifice of Christ (Heb. 6:6). When Jesus said “this is my body” to His disciples, He cannot have meant that the bread and wine on the table were his literal body, for his literal body was behind the table, not on it. Much like a teacher pointing to a map and saying this is the United States, that teacher does not mean that the map is literally the United States but rather that the map itself represents the United States.

At the table, the priest performs a miracle of calling Jesus down from His throne in heaven and comes to the table. But what is happening in this supposed miracle of the priest, they are creating an idol of the bread and wine by commanding Jesus to leave the right hand of God so that they may worship, what(?), the bread and wine! Not only that, if the priest is miraculously able to create this situation by bringing Jesus down to this supposed alter, let’s think logically about this, when the priest is breaking the bread and pouring the wine, he is BY IMPLICATION resacrificing Jesus Himself.

Consubstantiation – Martin Luther put forward this view and many Lutherans still adhere to it. They teach that **although the bread and wine do not actually become the literal body and blood, the physical body of Christ is literally present “in, with and under” the physical bread and wine**. The analogy here is kind of like water in a sponge, the idea being that Christ’s body is somehow “contained” in the elements. This is a VERY mystical view that tries to leave the view of Rome yet still tries to hold

onto it at the same time. This view arose from Luther's perception of a requirement to take the "this is my body" statement, in some sense, literally.

Spiritual Presence (Symbolism) – These are the views held by the rest of Protestant churches, as well as this local church. **The bread and wine symbolize the body and blood of Christ. They give a visible sign of the fact of His true, though spiritual, presence.** It's a visible symbol where those who are believers feed on Christ by faith.

In closing this evening, we need to ask the question of who should participate in the Lord's Supper? Here at FBCW, we fence the table, or another way to say that is that we are guarding the table by giving instructions on who should take it. You'll hear one of the pastors here say something along these lines—only those who are baptized believers and those who are not living in unrepentant sin. Something along those lines is what you'll hear every time.

Why baptized believers? I want to encourage you to go back and listen to last week's lesson as I addressed that there.

There are three main ways to approach the table when asking the question of who should participate.

Who Should Participate in the Lord's Supper?

- 1) **Closed Communion: Only members of that particular church may participate.**
- 2) **Close Communion: Any believer present at the church may participate whether or not he is a member.**
- 3) **Open Communion: There are no restrictions. Anybody can participate.**

Pop quiz—which of these does FBCW practice? Close communion. While our doctrinal statement places baptism as a prerequisite to communion, members and nonmembers alike can participate.

Having a closed communion has its advantages as it allows the pastors to keep close tabs on who is participating. The disadvantages is that you're not allowing any visitors to participate.

Open communion is riddled with problems. Now you're allowing literally anybody in there to participate. Marilyn Manson can come in and take it and that would be ok. There is literally no advantages to this method.

Fun fact, the greatest theologian that America ever produced was Jonathan Edwards. He was the pastor of a church in Northampton, Massachusetts in the 1700s. His grandfather was the preceding pastor who was well loved. His grandfather, though, practiced open communion. So when Jonathan took over, many well known hypocrites were participating. So because of Jonathan's conviction that only repentant believers should participate, he wouldn't allow many of the wicked townsmen to partake. Do you know what happened? Edwards was fired from his position in 1750 as the pastor.

These ordinances are important and they should be administered in a way that reflects that of the Bible. We desire to be a church that is thoroughly Biblical, therefore, even in these things that we have discussed tonight, our desire is not to follow the Baptist tradition because that's what we do. No, we want to follow these things as I have taught them because they are Biblical. It's what the Bible teaches. And that's our desire. Amen?