

Article 7 – Baptism and the Lord’s Supper Back to the Basics

Intro – Painful Rituals or Purposeful Remembrances?

- The story is told about the baptism of King Angus by St. Patrick in the middle of the fifth century. Sometime during the baptism, St. Patrick leaned on his sharp-pointed staff and inadvertently stabbed the king's foot.
- After the baptism was over, St. Patrick looked down at all the blood, realized what he had done, and begged the king's forgiveness. “Why did you suffer this pain in silence,” the Saint wanted to know. The king replied, "I thought it was all a part of the ritual."
- Contrary to popular opinion, baptism and the Lord’s Supper are **not painful rituals**. Rather, they are **purposeful remembrances** intended to bring Jesus to the center of our worship.
- From our study of the previous article on the church, we saw that Baptists have historically celebrated two ordinances. The manner in which we celebrate those ordinances is what sets us apart from other denominations.

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 Saviour, 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.

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- We start with baptism. First and foremost, “Christian baptism is the immersion of a believer in water.” The Greek word translated “baptize” throughout the NT is *baptizo*, and it literally means “to immerse or submerge.” In the case of a Christian, he/she is immersed in water according to the precedent established by Scripture.
- Examples of believer’s baptism are too numerous to mention but here are a few:
 - 3,000 on the Day of Pentecost – Acts 2
 - Simon the sorcerer – Acts 8
 - The Ethiopian eunuch – Acts 8
 - The Apostle Paul – Acts 9
 - Cornelius & his companions – Acts 10
 - Lydia & her household – Acts 16
 - The Philippian jailer & his family – Acts 16
 - Many Corinthians – Acts 18
 - Ephesian believers – Acts 19
- From the examples provided by Scripture, it’s very clear that **the biblical mode of baptism is immersion**. Why not sprinkling? Because every part of us has died with Christ & will be raised back to life when Jesus raptures His church.

- **Sprinkling is inadequate** because it simply doesn't capture the full meaning of salvation. We're not partially saved when we come to Christ. Every part of us comes into His covenant of grace.
- We are baptized "in the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit," but why? First, because that's what Jesus commanded us to do – "*Go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit*" (Matt. 28:19).
- Furthermore, the Father, Son, and Spirit represent the three members of the Godhead. It's only appropriate that new believers be baptized in the name of each member of the Trinity:
 - God is our Father
 - Christ is our Savior
 - The Holy Spirit is our Helper
- The Christian life absolutely **cannot be lived without the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit**. It can be lived without everyone else, but it certainly can't be lived without each One of them.

It is an act of obedience symbolizing the believer's faith in a crucified, buried, and risen Saviour, the believer's death to sin, the burial of the old life, and the resurrection to walk in newness of life in Christ Jesus.

- Baptism is "an act of obedience." I've already demonstrated how Jesus commanded us to be baptized in the Great Commission. He even went a step further – he modeled baptism for all of His followers at the outset of His ministry.
- Matt. 3:16 – "*When He had been baptized, Jesus came up immediately from the water.*"

- Baptism is not only obedience to the command of Christ, but it symbolizes "the believer's faith in a crucified, buried, and risen Savior." Through baptism we **publicly declare our faith in Jesus dead, buried, and risen from the dead!**
- The symbol of immersion is beautiful. Just think about it:
 - **Falling back** into the water represents "the believer's death to sin." Paul said, "*I have been crucified with Christ*" (Gal. 2:20).
 - **Being completely immersed** under the water represents "the burial of the old life." Paul also said, "*We have been buried with Him through baptism into death*" (Rom. 6:4)
 - **Being pulled up** from the water represents "the resurrection to walk in newness of life in Christ Jesus." Paul said, "*Christ lives in me; and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God who loved me and gave Himself for me*" (Gal. 2:20).
- Baptism captures these powerful words of Jesus – "*I am the resurrection and the life. He who believes in Me, though he may die, he shall live. 26 And whoever lives and believes in Me shall never die*" (John 11:25-26).

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.

- For a believer, baptism "is a testimony to his faith in the final resurrection of the dead." Truly, baptism is our **public profession** of faith in Jesus.

- Specifically, we let the world know that not only have we been crucified with Christ, but we've also placed our faith in His **power to raise us up** from the dead, just as He also resurrected from death.
- Baptists have long believed that baptism is "prerequisite to the privileges of church membership and to the Lord's Supper." In other words, **someone has to be baptized** before they can become a member of the local church and participate in the Lord's Supper.
- These days, churches vary quite a bit on this point. Some churches allow folks to be baptized with becoming a member of the church. Some churches will even allow believers to join without any evidence of believer's baptism.
- The pattern of Acts seems clear – once a person placed his faith in Jesus, he was then baptized and joined in fellowship with the Body. For that reason, requiring baptism for church membership is **not only historical, it's also biblical**.
- When it comes to the Lord's Supper, churches typically don't "police" those who are partaking of the elements. But historically, Lord's Supper has been reserved for those who've placed their faith in Jesus and publicly professed Him thru baptism.
- Simply stated, baptism helps us work toward "meaningful church membership." It should **mean something** to be a member of a local church.
- To summarize, let's consider these questions:
 - **What is baptism?** - A physical immersion (*baptizo*) in water that pictures Christ's death, burial, and resurrection and acts as a Christian's public profession of faith

- **How is baptism administered?** – by immersion, not sprinkling
- **Who is baptized?** Believers in Christ – not infants and not for the dead – I can't be baptized for someone else any more than I can be saved for someone else!
- **When is someone baptized?** – after they've placed their faith in Jesus – this is the biblical pattern
- **Why is someone baptized?** – because they've been regenerated and they want to obey the command of Christ to publicly declare their faith in Jesus – no such thing as "baptismal regeneration"

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- Leaving the subject of baptism, we come to the Lord's Supper. The BF&M says that the Lord's Supper "is a symbolic act of obedience." Like baptism, it **symbolizes something vitally important** and it is **a way in which we obey** the command of our Savior Jesus.
- Seeing the Lord's Supper as **a memorial** sets us apart as Baptists. During the Reformation, the mainline reformers wanted to hold on to elements of their Roman Catholic heritage.
- That applied to what Roman Catholics call the eucharist (the bread and the cup). RCC's believe in "**transubstantiation**" – the bread and cup become the literal body and blood of Jesus.

- Luther and other reformers taught a scaled-down version of that – “**consubstantiation**” – specifically that the Body and Blood of Jesus are somehow hidden behind the bread and the cup.
- Henry Zwingli rejected those more mystical views with one that lines up with the plain teaching of Scripture – the “memorial view – the elements are not the body and blood of Jesus. Rather, they are reminders of His body and blood sacrificed for us.
- Paul said, “*For as often as you eat this bread and drink this cup, you proclaim the Lord’s death till He comes*” (1 Cor. 11:26). **The elements are natural, but the meaning is supernatural.**
- The Lord’s Supper is reserved for “members of the church.” In this sense, we’re talking about the universal church, not just the local church. Most churches practice open communion – any believer in Christ can partake regardless of whether or not they are a member of that particular church.
- The Lord’s Supper is reserved for believers consistent with Paul’s teaching in 1 Cor. – “*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. 28 But let a man examine himself, and so let him eat of the bread and drink of the cup. 29 For he who eats and drinks in an unworthy manner eats and drinks judgment to himself, not discerning the Lord’s body. 30 For this reason many are weak and sick among you, and many sleep.*” (11:27-30)
- Partaking in an unworthy manner could apply to several things, but it certainly includes those who are unregenerate and those who are unrepentant.

- The elements of the Lord’s Supper are clear. When Jesus instituted the Lord’s Supper, He was partaking in the Passover with His disciples. Lord’s Supper is NOT the Passover, but it certainly finds **fullness of meaning** in the Passover.
- Jesus took bread (representing His body) and the cup (wine – representing His blood). He explained the symbols very clearly:
 - Bread – “*Take, eat; this is My body which is broken for you; do this in remembrance of Me*” (1 Cor. 11:24).
 - Cup – “*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).
- As awesome as the resurrection of Jesus is, when we come to the Lord’s Supper we aren’t remembering His resurrection. Rather, we are “proclaiming the Lord’s death *till He comes.*”
- The Lord’s Supper helps us never to forget the price that Jesus paid to set us free from sin. We will continue to observe baptism & the Lord’s Supper until Jesus returns – then we won’t need it anymore. What a day that will be!

Conclusion – Ask yourself these questions:

- Have I been baptized? If not, why not?
- Was I a believer when I was baptized? If not, would I be willing to be baptized again?
- Have I ever been immersed as Christ was?
- Have I ever really understood the true significance of the Lord’s Supper?
- Will I continue to use the Lord’s Supper to remember the body and blood of Jesus?