

# THE CHURCH: ITS TWO ORDINANCES

Scripture: Acts 8: 26- 40; Romans 6:3-5; I Corinthians 11:17-34

-- Prepared by Dr. Edward Watke Jr.

**Learn by Heart:** *“Go ye therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost.”* (Matthew 28:19)

## Lesson Outline:

- I. **Baptism, A Confession:** (Acts 8:26-40; Romans 6:3-5)
  - A. **The significance of the ordinance** -- (Acts 8:26-40; Rom. 6:3-5)
  - B. **The subjects of the ordinance** -- (Acts 8:26-40)
- II. **Communion, A Commemoration:** (I Corinthians 11:17-34)
  - A. **The look to the cross**, (upward look) vv. 24, 25
  - B. **The look to the coming**, (forward look) v. 26
  - C. **The look to the Christian**, (inward look) vv. 27-32

We need to understand the doctrine of the ordinances of the Church, be able to present their meaning to others, and to understand the importance of our observing these responsibilities. (Related Scripture reading: Matt. 26:20-30; I Cor. 10:16-33)

## Lesson Presentation:

There are only two ordinances which churches are to observe. These are the ordinances of the Lord's Supper and the ordinance of baptism. They do not find their origin in the pronouncements of men, but they have been given by divine appointment.

Baptists do not use the word *sacrament* when referring to these observances. The word *sacrament*, as it is used generally today, often conveys the idea of some merit of grace being imparted to the one who participates in these acts. Since Baptists do not believe that such an idea is Scriptural, they prefer to use the word *ordinance*. The word ordinance is derived from the Latin language, and it means something which is established or commanded, and enforced by proper authority.

### I. BAPTISM, A CONFESSION: (Acts 8:26-40; Romans 6:3-5)

Every Baptist ought to be familiar with the Biblical teaching concerning baptism since the name he bears is derived from this ordinance. However, the teaching of the Bible is sometimes difficult to perceive, since opinion varies so greatly on just about every aspect of baptism. Problems such as, *who* is to be baptized, *how* is baptism to be administered, and *why* baptism, are a few of the thorny difficulties to be resolved. Is there any solution to the difference held by different denominations? There is if one is willing to submit himself to the complete authority of the Word of God.

#### A. The Significance of the Ordinance: (Acts 8:26-40; Romans 6:3-5)

It must be clearly borne in mind that the baptism under discussion at this point is called Christian baptism or believer's baptism. This is to be distinguished from the baptism of John the Baptist. John came preaching a message which would prepare the way for Christ to rule over Israel (Matthew 3:1-12). He did not preach the Gospel as we know it today. The most

convincing reason that John's baptism is not believer's baptism is that some who had only received the John's baptism have to be rebaptized. (Acts. 19:4,5) Our baptism is as an act of obedience to an express command. (Matt. 28:18-20)

### **1. Our Lord's baptism also was not believer's baptism.**

The baptism of Christians today signifies the death and resurrection of Christ, whereby we are saved. It would make little sense to enact beforehand that which He was going to do in reality at the end of His ministry. Christ's baptism was unique. We could well ask, then why was He baptized? First, as an example for us, and 2) secondly as a manifestation that He is the Son of God. As the Father said, "*This is my beloved Son in whom I am well pleased.*" When we are baptized, we enter into this ordinance because we have become children of God through salvation by Christ's death for us on the cross.

### **2. There are two basic ideas conveyed by the observance of baptism.**

***The first, is that it is a public confession.*** The story of the Ethiopian eunuch's baptism is a case in point. (Acts 8:26-40). After he had heard the message as it was expounded by Philip, he requested baptism. (vv. 35,36). Although there is no information given as to how many were present at this baptism, it may still be considered as a confession of his belief in Christ to those who read the story of this man's conversion. ***The confession made involved three things:***

*a. It was a confession about a sacrifice.* (v. 32). The only way the sin problem could be settled was through a death. Christ died for our sins, and His death is pictured as the convert is placed under the water.

*b. It is also a confession about sin.* Since all men are sinners, the judgment upon sin has passed upon all men. (Romans 5:12, 19; 6:23; 4:24-25) Christ's death takes away the penalty of sin.

*c. It is also a confession about salvation.* Baptism does not save, but a person is baptized because he is saved. It is a confession that he has trusted in Christ as his Savior. (vs. 37)

Baptism is an outward sign of an inward change. It is an announcement to all who observe that a new life has been given on the basis of Christ's finished work on the cross.

***Second, baptism is a personal consecration.*** To often, the fact of a public testimony being made is the only thing stressed when a new Christian is baptized. This is important, but it is equally important to stress that baptism declares this person has now been set apart. ***This confession involves two things:***

*a. Baptism is an act of identification.* This is the basic meaning of all the forms of the word "*baptism*" mentioned in the Bible. In the case of believer's baptism it is an identification with Christ. (Romans 6:3). Romans 6:3-5 does not refer primarily to water baptism, yet is cannot be disassociated from it. The baptism of the Holy Spirit is in view here, because the changes which are said to take place could never come about as a result of water baptism. But that which takes place when the believer is baptized

into Christ's body may certainly be pictured by the ordinance of baptism. As we are wholly put into the water in the observance of water baptism, so the Holy Spirit wholly puts us into the family of God and into the results of Christ's death for us.

By immersion in water, the individual illustrates his death to the old way of life, and when he is raised, it points to the resurrection and impartation of a new life (v. 4). This new life is also an identification with other Christians. He now associates himself with God's people. This probably meant more in New Testament times than it does today. Then it even may have involved loss of home, family or life.

*b. As an act of consecration, baptism also points to a life of separation.* The world is being left behind, and now the believer is going to life for Christ. (Rom. 12:1-2) The separation is abrupt and complete as the picture of death conveys this idea so vividly. How often believers forget that they are saying these things as they go under the baptismal waters. It should be understood that this act I am involved in means I have a new life in Christ. I am not my own, I

am to live for Him. (Rom. 7:4; II Cor. 11:2)

**3. It is proper at this point to say a word about the mode of baptism.** The Scriptural method is immersion. This is demonstrated by the meaning of baptism. Since it signifies the death and resurrection of Christ by which we are saved, no other mode except immersion will be sufficient. In addition, the Greek verb which is translated by the English word "*baptize*" means to "*dip or immerse.*" There is little argument today among Bible students concerning the fact that immersion was the only form practiced in the early church.

It will interest you to know that John Calvin, founder of the Reformed Churches wrote: "*The very word baptize signifies to immerse, and it is certain that immersion was the practice of the ancient church.*"

The Reformed scholar, Philip Schaff, said, "... *the illustration of baptism used in the New Testament (Romans 6:3,4; Colossians 2:12; I Corinthians 10:2; I Peter 3:20, 21) are all in favor of immersion rather than sprinkling as is freely admitted by the best exegetes whether Catholic, Protestant, English or German.*" (Or the best at interpreting the Word of God.)

#### **B. The Subjects of the Ordinance:** (Acts 8:26-40; 8:

The teaching of the Word of God is very clear at this point. Every time we read in Scripture of someone being baptized it was always after the testimony of salvation in Christ's provision for this sin; it was after their confession of faith, or of belief in Christ as Savior. Whenever it took place the person involved knew what was taking place. There is no example of an infant being baptized in the New testament. Any statement to the contrary is based only on inference, not fact.

***It is for this reason that baptism is called believer's baptism.*** It is only for those who are saved, and only after a credible testimony of their trust in Christ as personal Savior. Infants are not capable of exercising such understanding or belief. The idea that infants should be baptized was one of the factors which introduced a change in the mode or method. In order to baptize young babies, another form, such as sprinkling, was thought to be more convenient.

As soon as a mistake is made concerning the significance of baptism, an error will be made in regard to the subjects of baptism. If baptism is related to one's salvation, then every effort will be made to include as many as possible, even infants. The Ethiopian eunuch (only one of many) made his profession of faith, (vs. 37) and then was baptized (vs. 38).

The natural man (I Cor. 2: 14) will endeavor to make himself acceptable by being baptized or by participating in the Lord's Supper. He will enter into many religious acts while not trusting the blood of Christ. (Acts 4:12; Eph. 2:8-9; Acts 16:30, 31)

## **II. COMMUNION, A COMMEMORATION:** (I Corinthians 11:17-34)

From the beginning we need to understand this is not a sacrament, nor a means of gaining good will or the grace of God or some special merit toward gaining heaven. The matter of one's personal relationship with God must be settled before coming to the Lord's Table.

This second ordinance given to the church is designated by several different names. In I Corinthians 10:16 it is called "*communion,*" in I Corinthians 10:21 it is spoken of as "*the Lord's Table.*" "*The Lord's Supper*" is the term used in I Corinthians 11:20, and "*breaking of bread*" in Acts 10:7. Probably the most frequently used name in churches today is the "*Eucharist.*" The New Testament does not employ this title, which means thanksgiving.

There are three major truths to be kept in mind when one comes to the communion service. They might be referred to as **three looks** which every Christian ought to take when he observes the Lord's Supper.

### A. The Upward look -- the Look To the Cross: vv. 24, 25

At the conclusion of each of these verses, the phrase "... *in remembrance of me*" is found. The two elements of the Lord's Supper are given to remind us of what Christ did on Calvary's cross. The bread, symbolizing the body of Christ, points to death in at least five ways. The seed is buried, it is cut down in harvest, it is ground in the mill, it goes through fire when it is baked, and it is generally broken before it is eaten.

The word "is" in verses 24, and 25 is a word pointing to a symbolical relationship. The elements are NOT actually the body and blood of Christ. Baptists differ from several other groups in this respect. They are on solid ground, however, because this is the teaching of God's Word. We don't literally eat Christ!! Transubstantiation is not taught in the Word of God-- that the wafer becomes the body of Christ and the grape juice becomes the blood of Christ upon partaking of the elements.

### B. The Forward look -- A Look To the Coming: v. 26

When a Christian takes part in the communion service, he is declaring a great truth. The word translated "*shew,*" is often used in the New Testament with the meaning of "*preach or declare,*" so the Christian is declaring Christ's death until He comes. The special object of this declaration is the death of Christ. It is to be continued until the Lord returns, as the present tense of the verb teaches. A person cannot truthfully or meaningfully take part in this service unless he believes in the return of Christ and is trusting in His sacrificial death. And then what about those who neglect being present or don't even attend a Bible believing church after their salvation? How sad for they are neglecting a clear command of God.

According to this verse, there is no doubt concerning the return of the Lord. The verse does not say, "... *ye do shew the Lord's death hoping he will come.*" There is no indication in the Bible that the Lord's Supper will be observed after Christ returns for His own, the bride of Christ, the Church.

### C. The Inward look -- The Look By the Christian: (vv. 27-32)

The key to this section is the phrase found in verse 28, "... *let a man examine himself...*" **He is to look within, to examine himself.** When a believer comes to the Lord's Table, there ought to be a very careful self-examination. The requirement is found in verse 28. The particular word translated "*examine*" generally contains the idea that the one examined will pass the test. This is the reason the next statement is made. No authority is given to anyone to perform this examination, except the person involved.

The **reason** for the examination is stated in verse 17. ***It is to avoid eating and drinking unworthily.*** Paul does not mean that only people who are worthy of the Lord's Supper can partake. If this were true, everyone would be excluded. We don't deserve to partake, it is not our privilege out of merit. The true meaning is that one is not to take it in an unworthy manner. The background of this passage, found in vv. 17-22, points out certain disorders which the Corinthian believers practiced before coming to the table.

***This is a time of self judgment about sin.*** We are to examine ourselves and then come to the Lord's Supper. (I John 1:7, 9) Anything which is incompatible with this commemorative service and the message which it so wonderfully proclaims must be dealt with in the heart of the Christian. Prior to partaking we are to have a clean, prepared heart.

Suppose a believer fails to follow this requirement? Verses 29-32 outline the results. A person who comes to the Lord's Supper in this fashion will bring judgment on himself. The word "*damnation*" is found in some translations of this verse. Such a translation might be misunderstood. Damnation generally refers to one's eternal state, and of course this cannot be true here, this is not in view or true of the genuine believer. (Romans 8:1; 5:1)

But in this case the Christian does bring chastening upon himself and this is clear in this portion. He will be chasten (maybe even unto illness, weakness, or possibly even premature

death) that he be not condemned with the world. The chastening mentioned here (v. 32) may assume three forms. Because of persistent failure to be prepared when partaking of the elements, a Christian may become physically weak (v. 30). Others may become actually sick as this indicates, and the third form of chastening may involve physical death. The word “*sleep*” is one which designates the death of a believer. There is a sin unto death.

It is a serious matter to take the Lord’s Supper in a light manner. God will deal with the one who fails to judge his own life. On the basis of verse 32, this chastening has a relationship to the eternal security of the saint. It relates to what we read in Hebrews 12:5-11 as well. God chastens us because we are His children in order to bring about Christlikeness, and godly living unto His glory. We are chastened because we ARE His children and He loves us too much to allow us to continue in sin. And unconfessed, unforsaken sin brings dishonor to God

The teaching of the Word of God exhorts us to first be prepared to sit at the Lord’s table by receiving Christ as Savior, since this ordinance is for Christians only. Second, we should be prepared to partake of the Lord’s table by making certain that we come to it in the right spiritual condition.

Do we truly make God’s Word the authority in our lives? Do we put ourselves under its clear direction as we obey?