



What We Believe

Article 12 of 13: Baptism and the Lord's Supper

12. Baptism and the Lord's Supper: We believe that baptism and the Lord's Supper are ordained by the Lord Jesus Himself. The former is connected with entrance into the new covenant community, the latter with ongoing covenant renewal. Together they are simultaneously God's pledge to us, divinely ordained means of grace, our public vows of submission to the once crucified and now resurrected Christ, and anticipations of His return and of the consummation of all things.

As we continue on our journey through our statement of faith, we have come to the very important topics of baptism and the Lord's Supper. These two ordinances are genuine blessings from God. One of the signs of a genuine biblically ordered church is that these ordinances are scripturally understood, administered and received. Over the span of church history unfortunate misconceptions and errors arose in relation to baptism and the Lord's Supper. Coming out of the Protestant Reformation, some of these errors and abuses were addressed. However, until this day some important differences remain between genuine local churches and denominations on these two ordinances. We hope to handle these differences with care and objectivity from the witness of Scripture.

Baptism and the Lord's Supper as Ordinances of the Church

As a Bible believing Christian Church, CrossLife Community Church holds that the Lord Jesus Christ has mandated two ordinances, baptism and the Lord's Supper. Baptism is a onetime ceremony that signifies the forgiveness of our sins and our union with Christ in His death, burial and resurrection through faith. The Lord's Supper is an ongoing Gospel centered observance in which Christ's people memorialize His redeeming death on the cross until He returns. These ordinances are genuinely Gospel ordinances. That is, they both demonstrate Gospel realities.

Many over the history of the Christian Church have referred to these ordinances as "sacraments". The word sacrament comes from the Latin *sacramentum*, meaning an oath of allegiance, obligation, or consecration. This Latin word has been used in church history to translate the Greek word for "mystery". Baptists, like ourselves however, usually refer to them as ordinances. The use of the word ordinance emphasizes them as observances that the Lord Jesus Christ has commanded His people to practice. Theologian Everett Harrison commented on the use of these terms:

"I call them 'ordinances' rather than using the word 'sacraments'. By ordinances I simply mean that they were especially 'ordained' or instituted by Christ. The reason I avoid the word 'sacraments' is that it tends to carry connotations that I don't believe are Biblical. Let me read a few sentences from a dictionary of theology to show what I mean: The [Latin word] *sacramentum* meant both 'a thing set apart as sacred', and 'a military oath of obedience as administered by the commander.' The use of this word for baptism and the Lord's Supper affected the thought about these rites, and they tended to be regarded as conveying 'grace' in themselves, rather than as relating men through faith to Christ.

Everett Harrison, et. al., eds., *Baker's Dictionary of Theology*, pp. 465-466.

John Piper said:

"The problem is in how grace is mediated to the recipient. The use of the word 'sacrament' leans toward treating the bread and cup, when duly consecrated by a priest, as mediating grace to the recipient in and of the bread and wine themselves more materially, not spiritually through faith. But the use of the word 'ordinance' - at least the way I am using it - leans toward treating the bread and the cup as means of helping the recipient to feed his soul on Christ spiritually, by faith, and in this way appropriate grace."

John Piper, Why We Eat the Lord's Supper, Part 2

For our purposes, it seems, the word ordinance best fit these two Gospel ordinances.

God's Pledge to His People

As our statement of faith says, these two ordinances serve together as God's pledge to His people. These Gospel ordinances are wonderful reminders that God will honor and fulfill His promises to

save to the uttermost those who come to Him through faith in the Lord Jesus Christ, and will and spiritually strengthen them to that end.

Means of Grace or Edification

The statement uses the term "means of grace" in describing baptism and the Lord's Supper. This phrase speaks of the ways or means through which God provides His unmerited favor to edify or build up His people through faith. In a very real sense these means of grace could be called means of edification. These means do not convey the blessing in or of themselves. The means are ways that God helps His people by grace through faith. Other means of grace or edification would be all the various aspects of worship such as the public exposition God's Word or private study of it, hearing the Gospel proclaimed, private and public prayer, private and public worship in hymns, psalms and spiritual songs, ongoing church and one another ministry, etc. So as God's people as we engage in these means of grace to the glory of God, we are also strengthened and edified by God through faith. Praise God for these edifying means of grace, through which He has chosen to strengthen us.



Baptism

What is the meaning of word baptism?

The word "baptism" comes from the Greek *baptisma*, meaning to immerse, plunge, or dip (as to dye something).

G. W. Bromiley elaborated on this meaning in his article in the Evangelical Dictionary of Theology:

"Deriving from the Greek *baptisma*, 'Baptism, denotes the action of washing or plunging in water, which from the earliest days has been used as the rite of Christian initiation, (Acts 2:41)'"

G.W. Bromiley, *Evangelical Dictionary of Theology*, Elwell, p. 112

Christian baptism is the visible ceremony of initiation for entrance into the visible church. According to Scripture it is the visible public testimony of new believers identifying themselves with Christ as Lord and Savior, and it also signifies being identified with Christ's people in the local church. This is seen in Acts 2 at Pentecost, when those who responded in faith to the Apostle Peter's preaching were added to the number of the primitive church:

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

"And the Lord added to their number day by day those who were being saved." Acts 2:47

Historical Development

Jewish Ceremonial Washing

Ceremonial washing began as early as the Exodus. In the New Dictionary of Theology we read:

"As early as the Exodus from Egypt, Leviticus prescribed ceremonial washing for those who had become ceremonially unclean, Lev. 14, 15. Aaron and his sons had to be ceremonially washed at their priestly ordination and on the Day of Atonement Aaron had to ceremonially bath himself before entering the most holy place, Lev. 8:5; 16: 3,4" New Dictionary of Theology, IVP, p 69.

Ritual Immersion - "Mikveh"

What we now know of as Christian Jewish religious culture of the first was known as "ritual immersion" or cleanliness. Many ritual immersion archaeological diggings. They would various utensils, furniture and other maintain their ritual purity.



Ritual immersion bath from approx. 69 AD

baptism developed out of the century. The Jews practiced what "mikveh", bathing for ceremonial baths have been uncovered in completely immerse themselves, things used in their lives to

John's Baptism

John the Baptist was the first prophet of the New Testament era. There had been a long silence of prophetic revelation from God to the Jewish people, a period of some 400 years. John was a cousin of Jesus, born some six month before Him. John came onto the scene in fulfillment of Isaiah's prophecy:

"As it is written in the book of the words of Isaiah the prophet, 'The voice of one crying in the wilderness: 'Prepare the way of the Lord, make his paths straight.'" Isaiah 40:4-5

John went out into the wilderness and was preaching and baptizing, preparing the way for the Lord, preparing the way for Jesus as Messiah. John's baptism was a baptism unto repentance. The mode of John's baptism was likely patterned after the full immersion of the mikveh ritual immersions mentioned above. In Matthew 3 we read:

"I baptize you with water for repentance, but he who is coming after me is mightier than I, whose sandals I am not worthy to carry. He will baptize you with the Holy Spirit and fire." Matthew 3:11

The Baptism of Jesus

When it was time for Jesus to messianic ministry, He went to partake of this baptism. Matthew wrote:

Then Jesus came from to be baptized by him. him, saying, "I need to you come to me?"

"Let it be so now, for all righteousness." Then

was baptized, immediately he went up from the water, and behold, the heavens were opened to him, and he saw the Spirit of God descending like a dove and coming to rest on him; and behold, a voice from heaven said, "This is my beloved Son, with whom I am well pleased". Matthew 3:13-17



officially embark upon His to where John was baptizing

Galilee to the Jordan to John, John would have prevented be baptized by you, and do But Jesus answered him, thus it is fitting for us to fulfill he consented. And when Jesus

Jesus partook of John's baptism as Messiah, not because He needed to repent, but as it were as He said, to "fulfill all righteousness". Through this event Jesus was anointed with the Spirit of God and was validated as God's One Unique Son with the audible voice of the Father from heaven.

Christian Baptism

Jesus, having received John's baptism, went on to call His twelve Apostles. John continued to baptize until His arrest, but Jesus' Apostles began to baptize also. The details of this baptism performed under Jesus' authority by His followers was not fully explained early on, but later was taught as a unifying or identifying with Jesus as Messiah and Savior. In Matthew 28:19, Jesus, the risen Christ gave the Great Commission, and in this commission, He commanded that His followers make disciples of all the nations and initiate them into the church through baptism. This visible initiation, or ceremonial entrance into the church was to be done in the name of the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit.

What Does Christian Baptism Signify?

As we noted briefly above, Christian baptism is the visible initiation rite or ceremony for entrance into the visible church. Relatively early in church history, error unfortunately began to creep into the churches in various areas, one of which was baptism. As regards baptism, it seems the church has erred in two directions over the years. Either baptism was overvalued, or its importance in relation to the Gospel and salvation overdone, or it seems like in our modern times baptism is undervalued, its importance in relation to the Gospel and salvation underestimated, and too often delayed.

Historically, there is no record of infant baptisms until around the early 3rd Century. By then, baptism came to be seen as conveying regeneration and therefore came to be seen necessary for salvation. The church father Tertullian, is the first to mention infant baptism and He was opposed to it. But as time passed, due to high infant mortality, parents began to despair that their children would perish if they died without baptism. As the centuries rolled by infant baptism became more and more prominent and then became the norm. By the 5th Century and the time of Augustine, baptism had taken on its fuller Roman Catholic sacramental form. It was said to convey regeneration, cleansing from original sin and to bestow justification, "ex opere operato", or by the very performance of it by a priest. Baptism was to be performed by an ordained priest except for only extreme emergency situations where the life of the person was in jeopardy. This history is very similar in the Eastern Orthodox Churches.

What Actually Happens in Baptism?

Christian baptism in water is the visible counterpart of the spiritual experience of the baptism with the Holy Spirit. As noted above, Jesus would baptize with the Holy Spirit and fire, Matt. 3:31. When one comes to faith in Christ, immediately, Christ baptizes them with the Holy Spirit into His Body, the Universal Church. For a more in-depth presentation of the baptism with the Holy Spirit see article # 9, "The Power of the Holy Spirit".

The ceremony of Christian baptism signifies putting on Christ and being identified with Him in His death, burial and resurrection.

"As many of you as were baptized into Christ have put on Christ"

Galatians 3:27

"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. Romans 6:3-5

"You were buried with him in baptism, in which you were also raised with Him through faith in the working of God, who raised him from the dead". Colossians 2:12

We clearly see that in the waters of baptism a visible ceremonial portrayal of our identification with Christ's death as we step into the water, with His burial as we are immersed and covered by the water and His resurrection as we are raised back up out of the water.

Like John's baptism, Christian baptism continues to carry with it the concept of repentance. At Pentecost, Peter responded to the crowd that they should repent and be baptized. Acts 2:38
Baptism symbolizes the washing of regeneration, Titus 3:5, and it also purification and the washing away of sins. "Be baptized and wash away your sins". Acts 22:16

Baptism similarly helps to give us a good conscience before God. The Apostle Peter wrote:

"Baptism, which corresponds to this, now saves you, not as a removal of dirt from the body but as an appeal to God for a good conscience, through the resurrection of Jesus Christ." 1 Peter 3:21

Receiving baptism in obedience to the Lord, works towards a good conscience before Him. Peter, having eluded to how God saved Noah's family through the flood in the ark, is not saying that the ceremony itself actually saves anyone, but serves as a good conscience before God. It is like a point in time remembrance. We can think back on our baptism as a point of demarcation from our old life of enmity with God and our new life of fellowship with Him.

The ceremony of baptism itself does not objectively convey regeneration, wash away original sin or grant the gift of the Holy Spirit, it symbolizes these experiences. Regeneration, justification, forgiveness of sins and other important facets of salvation like the indwelling of the Holy Spirit and the baptism with the Holy Spirit are distinct facets of the work of the Spirit in conversion. Though largely concurrent events, they are distinct facets experienced in the conversion experience. These are experienced when one comes to faith in Christ. Water baptism then, symbolizes these great conversion realities and is meant to be received as soon as possible, if not immediately after believing in Christ as a public testimony for all to observe that a new believer is united with Him.

Lastly, baptism also signifies identification with the local church. Many only see the personal aspects of faith in Christ and do not readily see its corporate connection with the local church. Since baptism is not as emphasized and taught about in the modern evangelical church as it once was, or in the mega churches, new comers do not necessarily understand this relationship until sometime later. The modern church needs to return to emphasizing the urgency of baptism like the primitive church did. When the symbolic relationship of water baptism to the Baptism with the Holy Spirit is clearly taught, the new believer or those who may be delaying their baptism will see it more clearly.

The Subjects of Baptism

As Bible believers and as Baptists, we firmly hold that only those who believe the Gospel and confess faith in our Lord Jesus Christ are to be baptized. In Acts chapter 2, we see this:

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

In an article of this limited scope, we can only do a summary of this important aspect of baptism. That being said, with the advent of Christ and the fulfillment of His work of redemption in the cross and the resurrection, there was a monumental change in covenantal administration. The Old Covenant was replaced and the Abrahamic Covenant was seeing its fulfillment by the implementation of the New Covenant. We have mentioned this covenantal change in previous articles.

In Old Testament times under the Covenant, the initiation rite or male descendants of Abraham day after their birth as a sign covenants. Females did not bear considered participants by virtue head, their father and then their Covenant, the emphasis was to and a particular ethnic group to by grace through faith in His Christian baptism was now the entrance into to Christ's new His church. No more racial female, but joint heirs by grace through faith in Christ.

In the New Testament, we find that only those professing personal faith in Christ were given baptism.

Historically, there is no record of infant baptisms until around the early 3rd Century.

Abrahamic Covenant and the Old ceremony was circumcision. All were to be circumcised on the 8th of being included in those the sign of the covenant, but were of their relationship to their male husband. Under the New change from physical descendants converts to Christ from all nations redeeming work in the Gospel. initiation rite or ceremony of nation, His new people of God, exclusivity, no more male nor

In the New Testament, we find that only those professing personal faith in Christ were given baptism. This is popularly known as believer's baptism and sometimes called "credo" baptism, (credo is Latin for "believe" or "confess"). This is what we believe at CrossLife Community Church. As a Southern Baptist Church we hold that only those who make a credible profession of faith in the Lord Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior should receive baptism. Grudem has written:

"The narrative examples of those who were baptized suggest that baptism was administered only to those who gave a believable profession of faith. After Peter's sermon at Pentecost, we read, "Those who received his word were baptized", Acts 2:41.

Wayne Grudem, Systematic Theology, p. 970.

Grudem goes on to note that those who believed in Christ through Philip's preaching, Acts 8:12, those in Cornelius' house through Peter's preaching, Acts 10:44ff., Lydia's household, Acts 16:14ff and the family of the Philippian jailer, Acts 16:32ff, all received baptism after having believed and or given credible signs of having received the Holy Spirit.

Some Church History

By way of historical background, as we noted before, infant baptism also known as "paedo-baptism" (*paedo* is Greek for "infant") began to be the norm in around the 3rd - 4th Centuries due to unscriptural understandings about the nature of baptism, that it conveyed regeneration. From that time on, it has continued to be the norm in most groups claiming Christian heritage. At the time of the Protestant Reformation, only some change occurred in the understanding of baptism as the Reformers continued with the practice of infant baptism. The Lutheran and Anglican Churches continued to teach baptismal regeneration and continued to baptize infants. Some Lutheran theologians actually theorized an "infant faith" as grounds for baptizing them. The Reformed wing of the Reformation however rejected baptismal regeneration and adopted a new basis for the continuation of infant baptism beginning with Ulrich Zwingli, who began to develop arguments for the continuation of infant baptism based on a new approach, what developed into what is now called "Covenant Theology". Some also argued for the continuation of infant baptism from the view that circumcision is parallel to baptism. Others have argued that infants should be baptized

based on the presumption that they will be regenerated, having been born into a believing, "covenant" home. Another movement was called the "Radical" Reformation. This was made up of various groups who were referred to as "Anabaptists", meaning "Re-baptizers", because they insisted on being re-baptized. These groups ranged from militant radicals to pacifists to mystics, to others who were sincere believers seeking to practice their beliefs from the Scriptures as best they knew. What they held in common, though, was that they thoroughly rejected the infant baptism of Roman Catholicism and insisted upon being re-baptized. We don't trace our historic lineage through the Anabaptists, even though we hold to believer's baptism. Our historic lineage is traced through the Reformed wing of the Reformation. As modern Baptists we are actually a sub-reformation movement from within the Reformed lineage, mainly differing with them as pertains to the doctrines of baptism and the church's relationship to the civil authorities.

Believer's Baptism

Well having covered some historical background, as we focus back on what Scripture says on this issue, we find that in fact there are no clear objective examples of any infants or very small children receiving Christian baptism in the New Testament. John MacArthur has said:

"Infant baptism is not in the Scripture. Scripture nowhere advocates or records any such thing as the baptism of an infant. It is therefore impossible to support infant baptism from the Bible. It is not in the Bible. There's not an incident of it, there's not a mandate, there's not a call for it, there's not a description of it. It doesn't appear. In fact, if you go back in history, and I'm going to do that a little bit with you, you will find that historians have affirmed this fact. Theological leaders in generations past have affirmed this truth. . . . "It arose, first of all, started appearing in the second and third century, became normalized in the fourth century. B. B. Warfield who was a noted Presbyterian, Presbyterians do infant baptism, affirmed that infant baptism does not appear in the Scripture."

[John MacArthur, Sermon, Is Infant Baptism Biblical? September 18, 2011](#)

The arguments and examples that paedo-baptists use, such as child blessing or household baptisms are really only circumstantial and inferential at best. There are no clear commands to baptize infants and no clear examples of it having happened in Scripture. With an understanding of the major changes in covenant administration in the New Covenant Gospel age, and recognizing the straightforward statements of Scripture describing and commanding believer's baptism, we affirm the credo-baptist position as the Biblical position. If a person received infant baptism and has subsequent to that come to saving faith in Christ, we encourage them to be baptized as a believer. It would be the Scriptural thing and it would be the right thing to do to honor Christ command.

What is the Minimum Age Appropriate for Believer's Baptism?

In order to be considered for baptism, a person must be of an age to be able to appropriately communicate their faith in Christ and a basic understanding of the Gospel. Some speak of an age of accountability, but the Bible doesn't really define such an age. Church leaders need to be as careful as possible to not baptize those who are not believers. This can be a difficult thing to discern even with adults, but especially difficult with small children. On the other hand, since baptism is not proof of salvation, but is a visible ordinance of professed faith in Christ, if a young person has a sincere and credible profession of faith they may be considered for baptism. Church leadership should interact with the parents of the child in discerning these issues.

The Mode of Baptism

Although baptism by immersion was the practice of the ancient church, the various church traditions have come to practice various modes of baptism over the years, such as sprinkling and pouring. By the Middle Ages, the Roman Catholic Church primarily practiced sprinkling. The Eastern Orthodox groups practice triple immersion in the Trinitarian formula. Lutherans sprinkle, Reformed and Presbyterian groups primarily pour. Anglicans and Methodists perform all three modes. Baptists, however, are known for practicing the ancient form of immersion. So, as we come to consider the question of the mode or manner in which baptism should be carried out, we should begin by pointing out the dominant meaning of the Greek word for baptism in the N.T.



According to Grudem the word to baptize:

"*baptizo*, means to plunge, dip, immerse something in water. This is the commonly recognized and standard meaning of the term in ancient Greek literature both inside and outside of the Bible. . . the sense "immerse" is appropriate and probably required for the word several New Testament passages . . . (Mark 1:5,10; John 3:23; Acts 8:36-9) . . . The symbolism of union with Christ in his death burial and resurrection seems to require baptism by immersion." Grudem, Systematic Theology, p. 967, 968

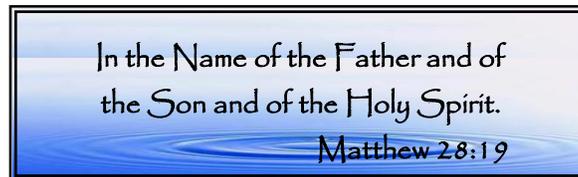
G.W. Bromiley, brought some historical context when he wrote:

"Immersion was fairly certainly the original practice and continued in general use up to the Middle Ages. The Reformers agreed that this best brought out the meaning of baptism as a death and resurrection." G.W. Bromiley, Baptism, Evangelical Dictionary of Theology, Elwell, p. 113

We would assert from the best meaning of the word to baptize as immerse, from the examples of washing, death, burial and resurrection in Scripture along with the acknowledgment of the Reformers and others, that immersion best portrays the rich symbolism of Christian baptism. We would however recognize that in situations where poor health of a new believer prohibits full immersion, that in order to obey Christ's command to be baptized, one may have to receive pouring or sprinkling as a last resort.

The Baptismal Formula

Jesus ordained that baptism should be performed in the name of the Father, and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, Matthew 28:19. This is known as the "Trinitarian Formula" of baptism. Just as creation was Trinitarian, that is the Father, the Son and the Spirit were active in creation, and just as redemption is Trinitarian, that is the Father ordained salvation and sent His One Unique Son to save a people which He accomplished on the cross, and the Holy Spirit applies that accomplished redemption to that people. So also, baptism is Trinitarian, in the name of the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit.



At Pentecost, Peter, having preached the Gospel to the crowd, as the text says they were cut to the heart and asked what they must do to be saved. Peter responded that they should repent and be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of sins, Acts 2:38. Though this does not seem to fully fit Jesus' mandate of baptism in the name of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit, according to the Greek scholar A.T. Robertson, Peter's words can very well be understood as being baptized by the authority of the Lord Jesus:

"In accordance with the command of Jesus in Matthew 28:19 . . . In the Acts the full name of the Trinity does not occur in baptism as in Matthew 28:19, but this does not show that it was not used. The name of Jesus Christ is the distinctive one in Christian baptism and really involves the Father and the Spirit. . . Luke does not give the form of words used in baptism by the Apostles, but merely states the fact that they baptized those who acknowledged Jesus as Messiah or as Lord"
A.T. Robertson, Word Pictures in the New Testament, Acts 2:38

So, here in Acts 2:38 and later in Acts 19:5 where the text says that individuals were baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus, it does not mean that the Trinitarian formula was not pronounced in the actual baptism of these people, but that they were baptized in the name of or by the authority of the Lord Jesus mandated in the Great Commission. In our times, some extreme Pentecostal groups, known as "Oneness Pentecostals" or "Jesus Only - Pentecostals" insist on baptizing in Jesus' name only. They claim that the Trinitarian formula was a Roman Catholic addition. The ancient texts of the New Testament do not confirm this out however.

They are the exception to the rule. At CrossLife, we follow in a long line of historical, evangelical and baptistic groups who use the Trinitarian formula, baptizing believers in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit.

Is Baptism Necessary For Salvation?

The question seems to always arise, is baptism in water necessary for salvation? Let us answer the question this way. Water baptism is not the prerequisite for justification, becoming right with God. As we have shown, baptism does not precede or convey regeneration, justification, the indwelling of the Spirit or the Baptism with the Holy Spirit, but instead it symbolizes these grand experiences of salvation. This being said, baptism is still a very important event in the full experience of salvation. It seems that in the modern church, baptism is too often delayed and put on the back burner, and replaced by other things like the modern alter-call. But, a new believer in Christ should seek to be baptized at his very first opportunity.

If a person genuinely believes in Christ and has truly been born from above, justified, indwelt by the Spirit and has been baptized with the Holy Spirit, he will not be satisfied until he obeys the Lord's command and receives baptism. On the other hand, if a person believes in Christ and providentially dies or is killed before having the opportunity to be baptized, he would not be guilty of dishonoring our Lord's command. An example of this would be the repentant thief on the cross with Jesus. But, the new believer's attitude towards baptism should be akin to that of the Ethiopian eunuch, when he asked Phillip, "what hinders me from being baptized?" A new believer in Christ should urgently desire baptism as a formal, visible, public testimony of his new life in Christ and the modern church should return to the ancient Biblical pattern of baptizing the new believer as soon as possible.

The Lord's Supper

The Lord's Supper is another wonderful blessing from our Savior given as a means of grace or of edification to His people. This expression, Lord's Supper is only found one time in the New Testament in 1 Corinthians 11:20. The phrase, "breaking of bread", used various times in the book of Acts may likely be another reference to the Lord's Supper. The Zondervan Encyclopedia article asserts, "Certainly it became so in subsequent years of the church's history." p. 978

It is also referred to as the Lord's Table and Communion and in some traditions has been called the Eucharist, meaning "giving thanks" (1 Cor. 11:24).



It can be said the Lord's Supper is the New Covenant parallel or fulfillment of the Old Covenant Passover feast. In fact it was at Jesus' last observance of the Passover, what we have come to call the "Last Supper" when He gave the ordinance of the Lord's Supper to His church. The Apostle Paul wrote that Jesus is our "Passover", 1 Corinthians 5:7. God had appointed the feast of Passover for the Israelites so that year by year they would be made to remember how the Lord passed over the households with the blood stains on the door posts sparing the first-born within and subsequently delivered them from bondage in Egypt. So also our Lord Jesus said, "Do this in remembrance of Me". The Apostle Paul wrote, as often as we eat the bread and drink the cup, we proclaim the Lord's death until He comes. The Lord's Table is a memorial for us to vividly remind us our Savior's redeeming love. By His wounds we have been healed from the curse and ravages of sin, Is. 53:5; 1 Peter 2:24, and in Him we have redemption through His blood, the forgiveness of our trespasses, according to the riches of His grace, Ephesians 1:7. More on this later.

In the Gospel Coalition booklet, "Baptism and the Lord's Supper", Thabiti Anyabwile wrote:

"The night that Jesus instituted Holy Communion, he redefined the elements of the meal. The bread and wine stood for centuries as reminders of the lambs slaughtered on that first Passover. But Jesus revealed what even that first Passover signified: his body broken and his blood shed for sin. In the simple act of eating and drinking, the disciples were to remember that Christ our Passover Lamb was sacrificed (1 Cor. 5:7). He sacrificed himself for many for the forgiveness of sins." *Baptism and the Lord's Supper*, p. 19

John MacArthur has written:

"the divinely ordained Passover remembrance ended when Jesus celebrated it that night with His disciples. Any observance of it since that time has been based solely on human tradition, the perpetuation of an outward form that has long since lost its spiritual significance. But for those who belong to Jesus Christ, that event in the upper room began a new remembrance of redemption that the Lord will honor until He returns in glory."

[John MacArthur, Instituting the Lord's Supper](#)

R. S. Wallace helps bring deeper understanding into the relationship of the fulfillment of the Passover by the Lord's Supper:

"Jesus in giving the elements their own fellowship and sacrificial death. Moreover, also ritual not only of the of a covenant meal. In the followed by a meal in which were pledged to loyalty one to 3:20). The covenant between followed by a meal in which God." The New Covenant his people was thus ratified by Supper, Jesus emphasized the significance of the Passover forward to a future deliverance that from Egypt. A cup was set come that very night to bring promise of the messianic have been this cup which Jesus rite, indicating that even now the Messiah was present to feast with his people."

"This is My body,
which is given for you.
Do this in
remembrance
of Me."

"This cup that is
poured out for you is
the New Covenant in
My blood."
Luke 24:20

thus gave to his disciples a sign of participation in the event of his Jesus included in the Last Supper the paschal and sacrificial meal but OT the making of a covenant was the participants had fellowship and another (Gen. 26:30; 31:54; II Sam. God and Israel at Sinai was likewise people "ate and drank and saw (Jer. 31:1-34) between the Lord and Jesus in a meal. In celebrating the messianic and eschatological meal. At this feast the Jews looked which was foreshadowed in type by aside for the Messiah lest he should about this deliverance and fulfill the banquet (cf. Isa. 25-26; 6:13). It may took in the institution of the new

Evangelical Dictionary of Theology, Elwell, p. 652

What a wonderful glimpse these quotations give us of just how rich and deep God's working in the drama of redemption is, developing the themes of covenant, sacrifice and communion related to the giving of the Lord's Supper in the life of the church. The Lord's Supper is our New Covenant meal!

Jesus' own words about the Supper are recorded for us in all three of the synoptic Gospels:

"Now as they were eating, Jesus took bread, and after blessing it broke it and gave it to the disciples, and said, 'Take, eat; this is My body.' And He took a cup, and when He had given thanks He gave it to them, saying, 'Drink of it, all of you, for this is My blood of the covenant, which is poured out for many for the forgiveness of sins.'" *Matthew 26:26-28*

"And as they were eating, he took bread, and after blessing it broke it and gave it to them, and said, 'Take; this is my body.' And He took a cup, and when he had given thanks he gave it to them, and they all drank of it. And He said to them, 'This is My blood of the covenant, which is poured out for many.'" *Mark 14:22-24*

"And when the hour came, He reclined at table, and the Apostles with Him. And he said to them, 'I have earnestly desired to eat this Passover with you before I suffer. For I tell you I will not eat it until it is fulfilled in the kingdom of God.' And he took a cup, and when he had given thanks He said, 'Take this, and divide it among yourselves. For I tell you that from now on I will not drink of the fruit of the vine until the kingdom of God comes. And he took bread, and when He had given thanks, He broke it and gave it to them, saying, 'This is My body, which is given for you. Do this in remembrance of Me.' And likewise the cup after they had eaten, saying, 'This cup that is poured out for you is the New Covenant in My blood.'" *Luke 22:14-20*

The Apostle Paul wrote to the Corinthians how the Lord had revealed the Lord's Supper to him:

"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.' For as often as you eat this bread and drink the cup, you proclaim the Lord's death until he comes." 1 Corinthians 11:23-26

With the language used by Jesus and the Apostle Paul in regards to the Supper, many in history have come to various conclusions as to their literal or spiritual significance.

Some More Church History

Very early on in the primitive church, our "Jewish Christian" forefathers in the faith gathered and partook of the Lord's Supper likely on a daily basis in the temple area and in their homes, Acts 2:42ff. Soon, they began meeting on a weekly basis on Sundays, the first day of the week, in honor of the Lord's resurrection. They would gather to hear the Word of God read and expounded, pray, encourage one another in the faith and then they shared in the Lord's Supper together to memorialize the Lord's death in their love feasts or "agape feasts".

According to theologian Louis Berkhof it wasn't until later that controversies began concerning the spiritual or literal significance of our Lord's words, "this is My body, this is My blood".

Church fathers like Basil the Great, 330AD, maintained a symbolic or spiritual sense of the Lord's Supper, but others like Chrysostom, 347AD, and Cyril, 412AD, began to teach that the body and blood of Christ were in some way combined with the bread and the wine in the Supper. Berkhof went on to write that Augustine, 354 AD, worked to retard the development of the idea of a physical "real presence" of Christ in the Lord's Supper for a long time. Although he referred to the bread and wine as the body and blood of Christ, he distinguished between the sign and the thing signified and did not believe in any change of the substance of the elements. Augustine argued that Christ's presence in the Supper was spiritual. It seems that the idea of the full physical real presence of Christ in the eucharist did not come full circle into what is now known by the term "Transubstantiation" until the 9th Century through the arguments of one Paschasius Radbertus, 818AD, in the Middle Ages. See Louis Berkhof, Systematic Theology, p. 645

G.W. Bromiley wrote:

"The concept of Transubstantiation was declared the faith of the Western Church (Roman Catholic) by 1059, and was done so by name at the Fourth Lateran Council in 1215."

G.W. Bromiley, Evangelical Dictionary of Theology, Elwell, p. 653

It is very important that we realize that when a Roman Catholic priest pronounces the words, the bread is said to be transformed into the body and blood of Christ. The priest says, "the Body of Christ", and the partakers of the Mass are directed to worship the host with the worship due to God.

What about the Eastern Orthodox Churches?

Though the term "Transubstantiation" was used particularly in the Roman Catholic Church, similar views of a real physical presence of Christ developed in the Eastern Churches:

"The Eucharist is the center of life in the Orthodox Church because the church is primarily a eucharistic community. The Eucharist is the completion of all of the church's other sacraments and the source and the goal of all of the church's doctrines and institutions."

"Eucharist (from the Greek εὐχαριστία, or eucharistia, meaning *thanksgiving* or *giving thanks*) is a holy mystery (or sacrament) that is celebrated during the Divine Liturgy within the Orthodox Church where the consecrated bread and wine, through the power of the Holy Spirit becomes the Precious Blood and Body of Jesus Christ, that is consumed by prepared Orthodox Christians."

"The Eucharist in the Orthodox Church is understood to be the genuine Body and Blood of Christ"

[Eucharist, OrthodoxWiki](#)

Another very grave error that came into the Roman Catholic Church was the idea that the Lord's Supper or eucharist was really a sacrificial ceremony. As the Mass developed, it became the central

facet of Roman Catholic worship. In Catholicism, the Lord's Supper is called the Sacrifice of the Mass or the Eucharistic Sacrifice. In this unscriptural view, they claim that the sacrifice of Christ is re-offered or re-presented to God as a propitiatory or atoning sacrifice. This is not to be confused with the idea of the body and blood of Christ being represented or symbolized in the elements. They mean presented again and again as a sacrifice. This view very seriously diminishes the sufficiency of Christ's once and for all atoning death on the cross according to Scriptures.

The Eastern Orthodox Churches also regard the Eucharist as an actual sacrifice:

"according to Orthodox theology, the Eucharist is a propitiatory sacrifice, offered on behalf of both the living and the dead."

[Eucharist, OrthodoxWiki](#)

Under the Reformation, some very important reforms were made but the Lutheran and the Reformed wings of the Reformation were never able to fully agree. Though the Reformers rightly realized that the Lord's Supper was not a repetition or a re-presentation of the Christ's once and for all sacrifice, they did not agree on their understanding of the nature of the presence of Christ in the Supper. Luther continued to insist that Christ was present physically in the elements. In the Lutheran view of Christ's presence in the Lord's Supper they also take the words of Christ's institution literally. Luther, however, maintained that the elements were not transformed in the way the R.C. view portrays; they remained bread and wine, but Jesus' body and blood were present in, under, and along with the elements of the sacrament. This view is called "Consubstantiation."

In the Reformed wing of the Reformation, some like Zwingli maintained that the Supper was strictly a memorial with no extraordinary presence of Christ, but Calvin argued for a "spiritual real presence". Calvin argued against the Lutheran and R.C. doctrine, reasoning more consistent with Scripture that in Christ's human nature, His physical resurrected body is not omnipresent, but currently remains at the right hand of the Father until He returns. Yet, he argued that Christ was really present "spiritually" in the Supper through His divine nature.

What is at stake?

What is at stake here is huge. First, the glory of Christ and of God are at stake, because if we make to little or too much of the Supper we misrepresent the Gospel in the Supper and dishonor the memory of our Lord's death. In addition, many of our spiritual forefathers were persecuted, jailed and tragically some were killed, even burned at the stake over the unscriptural dogmas in the Roman Catholic Church. John Piper again has emphasized what is really at stake in this connection:

"The heart of the Mass was the real physical, material presence of the incarnate body of Christ in the form of bread and wine. This was essential, not peripheral, because in the consecrating words of the priest another crucial sacrifice happened with this body. This is what the Protestant Reformers saw. And this is what they believed undermined the Gospel of Christ crucified once for all for our sins. John Piper, Why We Eat The Lord's Supper #1 (see the complete quote in the appendix)



What then is the Meaning of the Lord's Supper?

With a brief historical overview under our belts, let's move forward and ask what the meaning and significance of the Lord's Supper is and in what sense did Jesus intend His words to be understood? Just as the Gospel is proclaimed through preaching and teaching, so also, the Gospel is displayed, portrayed and pictured in the Lord's Supper.

Wayne Grudem commented about the spiritual richness, depth and treasures of the Lord's Supper:

"The meaning of the Lord's Supper is complex, rich, and full. There are several things symbolized and affirmed in the Lord's Supper."

He went on to specify at least seven significant things symbolized in the Supper:

"Christ's Death, Our Participation in the Benefits of Christ's Death, Spiritual Nourishment, The Unity of Believers, Christ Affirms His Love for Me, Christ Affirms that All the Blessings of Salvation are Reserved for Me, and I Affirm My Faith in Christ."

Grudem, Systematic Theology, p. 989-991

John Piper emphasized six important meanings of the Lord's Supper in his sermon, "Why We Eat the Lord's Supper".

The first meaning was that the Lord's Supper is a proclamation of the Gospel ("As often as you eat this bread and drink the cup, you proclaim the Lord's death until he comes." 1 Cor. 11:26)

The second meaning was that the Lord's Supper is a remembering of Christ ("Do this in remembrance of me." 1 Corinthians 11:24).

The third meaning was that the Lord's Supper is a spiritual feasting by faith on all that God is for us in Christ ("I am the bread of life; whoever comes to me shall not hunger, and whoever believes in me shall never thirst." John 6:35).

The fourth meaning was that the Lord's Supper is a savoring of the promises of the New Covenant ("This cup is the new covenant in my blood." 1 Corinthians 11:25).

Fifth, the Lord's Supper is a call to love the people of Christ, and beyond.

Sixth, the Lord's Supper is a call to self-examination. 1 Corinthians 11. John Piper Lord's Supper

To expound upon the above points briefly:

Remembering Christ's Death according to the Gospel - When we participate in the Lord's Supper, we remember the death of Christ because partaking of the emblems is a picture of His death for us. When the bread is broken it symbolizes the Lord's physical punishment and death on the cross and when we partake of the cup it symbolizes His blood shed for us. This is why participating in the Lord's Supper is also a kind of visible Gospel proclamation of His death. It is a portrayal of redemption accomplished.

Our Participation in the Benefits of Christ's Death/ Our Good News - As we partake we are declaring that Jesus' death avails for us personally and corporately. In accordance with the promises of the New Covenant, our sins forgiven and remembered no more. We declare that our sin-debt has been cleared. We declare that He has actually purchased us by His blood and that we are reconciled to God through His death. It is a portrayal redemption applied.

Spiritual Nourishment and Edification - Just as natural food nourishes our bodies, so Christ nourishes us spiritually as we partake of the emblems representing His body and blood through faith. In a real sense we feed upon Christ and are nourished spiritually in the Supper. Jesus said:

"unless you eat the flesh of the Son of man and drink his blood, you have not life in you. . . . My flesh is food indeed and my blood is drink indeed . . . Whoever feeds on my flesh and drinks my blood abides in me, and I in him. . . whoever feeds on me, he also will live because of me. . . . Whoever feeds on this bread will live forever. . . . The words that I have spoken to you are spirit and life." John 6:53 ff

In the Lord's Supper we see a picture of how Christ in the Gospel, sustains and nourishes us through faith in an ongoing way.

The Unity of Believers - The Apostle Paul wrote, "Because there is one bread, we who are many are one body, for we all partake of one bread", 1 Corinthians 10:17. We need to seek to preserve the peace and unity of the local church at all times, but especially harmony as we partake of communion together. We are one in Christ through the Gospel and we demonstrate our oneness in Him as we gather around His table in unity.

Christ Affirms His Love For Us Personally/ Corporately - Jesus does not just mandate us to come to His table but in the great love with which He loves us He calls and invites us to come, which is a vivid reminder that Jesus loves us personally and corporately. In this ordinance we savor the promises of the New Covenant. God is our God and we are His people. We show that since we love Christ, we also love one another.

Christ Affirms that All the Blessings of Salvation are Reserved Us - Partaking of the Lord's Supper is like a foretaste of the future Marriage Supper of the Lamb, Rev. 19. He has blessed us with all spiritual blessings in the heavenly places, Ephesians 1. He has gone to prepare a place for us that where He is, we may be there with Him. John 14.

Affirmation of Faith in Christ - At the Lord's Supper, we confess our sinfulness to God and affirm our great need of Christ and cleansing by His blood in our life every day. We affirm by faith that Christ is our very life. It is also a call to examine ourselves, showing we are genuine partakers of the faith. Preparing for and partaking of the Lord's Supper has a purifying effect on us.

The Apostle Paul wrote,

"Examine yourselves, to see whether you are in the faith. Test yourselves." 2 Corinthians 13:5

We must discern the Lord's body on which He bore our sins, so that we do not dishonor the Lord and bring correction upon ourselves.

Again Paul wrote:

"Therefore, my beloved, flee from idolatry. I speak as to sensible people; judge for yourselves what I say. The cup of blessing that we bless, is it not a participation in the blood of Christ? The bread that we break, is it not a participation in the body of Christ? Because there is one bread, we who are many are one body, for we all partake of the one bread. Consider the people of Israel: are not those who eat the sacrifices participants in the altar? What do I imply then? That food offered to idols is anything, or that an idol is anything? No, I imply that what pagans sacrifice they offer to demons and not to God. I do not want you to be participants with demons. You cannot drink the cup of the Lord and the cup of demons. You cannot partake of the table of the Lord and the table of demons." 1 Cor. 10:14-21

And again, he warned:

"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." 1 Corinthians 11:27-29

We must be careful to partake of this blessing in a worthy manner. John MacArthur has said concerning this:

"One can come to His table unworthily in many ways. It is common for people to participate in it ritualistically, without participating with their minds and hearts. They can go through the motions without going through any emotions, and treat it lightly rather than seriously. They can believe it imparts grace or merit, that the ceremony itself, rather than the sacrifice it represents, can save or keep one saved. Many come with a spirit of bitterness or hatred toward another believer, or come with a sin of which they will not repent. If a believer comes with anything less than the loftiest thoughts of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, and anything less than total love for his brothers and sisters in Christ, he comes unworthily.

To come unworthily to the Lord's table is to become guilty of the body and blood of the Lord. . . . To come unworthily to Communion does not simply dishonor the ceremony; it dishonors the One in whose honor it is celebrated.

. . . The table thus becomes a special place for the purifying of the church. That is a vital use of Communion, and Paul's warning reinforces that ideal. A person who partakes without coming in the right spirit eats and drinks judgment to himself, if he does not judge the body rightly. Judgment (*krima*) here has the idea of chastisement. Because "there is therefore now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus" (Romans 8:1), The great difference in Paul's use here of *krima* (judgment) and *katakrima* (condemned) is seen in verse 32, where it is clear that *krima* refers to discipline of the saved and *katakrima* refers to condemnation of the lost. That chastening comes if he does not judge the body rightly, that is, the blood and body used in Communion. To avoid God's judgment, one must properly discern and respond to the holiness of the occasion.

[John MacArthur, Unworthy Manner](#)

All this being said, we are all still sinners saved by grace. We will struggle with sinfulness until we die. None of us are in and of ourselves "worthy" partakers of the Lord's Supper. The emphasis here in 1 Corinthians 11:27 is partaking in a worthy manner, a manner or way in which is worthy of this holy communion. There is a purifying aspect involved as we, as saved sinners, come to the Lord's Table, repentant, confessing our sins, and there, seek forgiveness, encouragement, refreshing and spiritual nourishment by grace through faith in Jesus.

Awaiting Christ until He Returns -

Jesus said, "you proclaim my death until I return." This tells us that we should continue to partake of the Lord's Supper regularly, continuing faithful in the Gospel and in this Gospel ordinance until He returns. Many times the thought of Christ's return, of our gathering together unto Him of the completion of our redemption in the resurrection and of dwelling with Him personally for eternity,

is clouded by the pleasures and pressures of daily life. By regularly partaking of the Lord's Supper we will be reminded to long for His coming with expectation.

Memorial? Or More?

This brings us back to our Lord's words, "this is my body, this is my blood" and to the question of just how is our Lord present in or at the Lord's Supper? Is the Supper just a memorial or is the Lord really present in it in some spiritual way? The Lord's Supper is a wonderful remembrance and memorial of Jesus' all-sufficient sacrificial death. Having said that, we need to realize that the Lord's Supper is not just a memorial.

At CrossLife Community Church we approach this particular issue with care and Biblical discernment. We confess that the Lord's Supper is indeed a memorial as it is referred to in Scripture, yet we see that it is more. We absolutely deny that the elements become the actual body and blood of Christ, or that Christ is present physically in the actual elements. We do affirm, however, that Christ is present in a special and spiritual way in the Lord's Supper in response to our faith. It is a spiritual participation in His body and blood through faith portrayed through the partaking of the symbols of the bread and cup. The Apostle Paul wrote:

"The cup of blessing that we bless, is it not a participation in the blood of Christ? The bread that we break, is it not a participation in the body of Christ?" 1 Corinthians 10:16.

The Lord's Supper is a memorial and more!
We remember the Lord's death until He returns, and also in a special and spiritual way, Jesus is present in response to our faith as we partake of the bread and the cup, the symbols of His body and blood.

This is how some of our Baptist predecessors characterized this spiritual reality:

"Worthy receivers, outwardly partaking of the visible elements in this ordinance, do then also inwardly by faith, really and indeed, yet not carnally and corporally, but spiritually receive, and feed upon Christ crucified, and all the benefits of his death; the body and blood of Christ being then not corporally or carnally, but spiritually present to the faith of believers in that ordinance, as the elements themselves are to their outward senses. (1 Corinthians 10:16; 1 Corinthians 11:23-26)"

The London Baptist Confession, 1689, Chapter 30: Of the Lord's Supper, Paragraph 7

Spiritually, we partake of and feed on the body and blood of our Lord Jesus Christ by faith. So in answer to the question above, in what sense did Jesus intend His words to be understood? The Lord said:

"I am the bread of life, whoever comes to Me will never hunger and whoever believes in Me will never thirst."

John 6:35

"The words I have spoken to you are spirit and they are life."

John 6:63

A Means of Edification not an Atoning Sacrifice.

At CrossLife Community Church, we affirm that the Lord's Supper is a wonderful means of grace and spiritual edification for believers, but we deny that it is an atoning sacrifice. As we noted above in our historical overview, both Rome and the Eastern Churches view the Lord's Supper as repetitious propitiatory sacrifice. Propitiation is a word that speaks of satisfying or appeasing the anger of an offended party. In the Fall, man sinned against and offended God. The guilt of this offense has continued down through the generations in what is called Original Sin. Since mankind is bound in sin and incapable of undoing this terrible offense, only a perfect redeemer can deal with it. Jesus is the only answer to this dilemma. At the cross, He satisfied the wrath of God for all who believe. The letters to the Romans and especially to the Hebrews describes Christ's death expressly as a once and for all, unrepeatable, all sufficient sacrifice of atonement or propitiation for man's sin dilemma. See Romans 6:10; Hebrews 9:12, 26; 10:1, 10. The view of Rome and the Eastern Churches undermines Biblical truth, it undermines the Gospel, and perverts the Lord's Supper.

Who are the right participants?

Due to the special spiritual nature of the Lord's Supper, only baptized believers in good fellowship with God should partake. As we have seen, one must be able to spiritually discern the Lord's body. The New Testament pattern as we mentioned previously is for new believers to be baptized immediately or as soon as possible after making a credible profession of faith. Water baptism is the ceremony of initiation into the church. Then the baptized, initiated believer is ready to come to the Lord's Table to partake of the Lord's Supper with the congregation. Modern churches should endeavor to follow this norm or pattern from the primitive church. Trusting in Christ in response to the Gospel, profession of faith, baptism, Lord's Supper, this is the Biblical pattern.

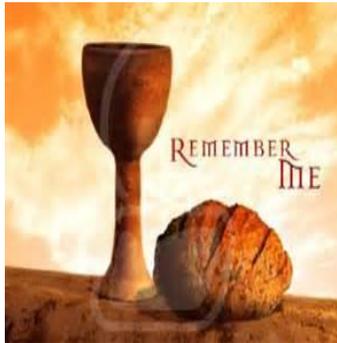
How Often Should Observe the Lord's Supper?

As we mentioned earlier in our historical overview, our ancient forefathers in the beginning, lead by the Apostles, gathered daily from house to house and around the temple area to "break bread" and have fellowship. Soon the practice was week by week on the first day of the week at their Lord's Day gatherings. Under Roman Catholicism since the Supper came to be seen as the center of the Mass, and as an actual atoning sacrifice, it was observed on a daily, multiple times a day basis and still is to this day. Since the Reformation, the churches of the Reformation have observed it either on a weekly, monthly, and yearly basis. From our Lord's words, "as often as you do it", we can recognize an emphasis of observing the Supper on a regular basis. CrossLife Community Church observes the Lord's Supper on a monthly basis, first Lord's Day of each month, and also on Good Friday, as a remembrance of our Lord's death.

Bringing Everything Together

In summary, let's bring everything together.

Our Lord has given us two wonderful ordinances in the church, baptism and the Lord's Supper. These two ordinances help us as through which we are built up in ceremonial initiation into the are publicly testifying that we united with Him in His death, therefore we are united to His ongoing New Covenant ceremonial Lord's Supper we remember the and we are built up and nourished Christ by grace through faith as cup. As we consider what we have read, and ponder the great spiritual blessings involved, our prayer is that we will all come to see baptism and the Lord's Table in their proper more Biblical significance.



means of grace or edification, the faith. Baptism is a one-time church. In baptism, believers have believed in Christ are burial and resurrection, and people. The Lord's Supper is an meal of spiritual renewal. In the Lord's death until His returns, in our faith spiritually feeding on we partake of the bread and the

**When I survey the wondrous cross On which the Prince of glory died,
My richest gain I count but loss, And pour contempt on all my pride.**

**Forbid it, Lord, that I should boast, Save in the death of Christ my God!
All the vain things that charm me most, I sacrifice them to His blood.**

**See from His head, His hands, His feet, Sorrow and love flow mingled down!
Did e'er such love and sorrow meet, Or thorns compose so rich a crown?**

**Were the whole realm of nature mine, That were a present far too small;
Love so amazing, so divine, Demands my soul, my life, my all.**

Isaac Watts, 1707

Bibliography & Resources:

Everett Harrison, et. al., eds., Baker's Dictionary of Theology, pp. 465-466
G.W. Bromiley, Evangelical Dictionary of Theology, Elwell, p. 112, 652, 653
Louis Berkhof, Systematic Theology, p. 645
Thabiti Anyabwile, Baptism and the Lord's Supper, p. 19, Gospel Coalition Booklet
Wayne Grudem, Systematic Theology, p 950-1002

Free Online Resources:

[John Piper, Why We Eat The Lord's Supper #1](#)
[John Piper, Why We Eat The Lord's Supper #2](#)
[The London Baptist Confession, 1689, Chapter 30: Of the Lord's Supper](#)
[John MacArthur, Sermon, Is Infant Baptism Biblical?](#)
[John MacArthur, Partaking in the Lord's Supper in an Unworthy Manner](#)

Appendix:

From John Piper, "Why We Eat The Lord's Supper"

There are two ordinances that the Lord Jesus commanded for his church to perform. One is baptism, the other the Lord's Supper. I was convicted a few weeks ago, while reading a book on baptism, that for many years I have not preached on the meaning of the Lord's Supper. I preached four messages on baptism in 1997. But I have never done anything comparable on the Lord's Supper. So my intention is to devote this Sunday and the next to unfolding the meaning of the Lord's Supper from the New Testament.

Focus with History

A little history might help us focus here. On March 20, 1531 in the Netherlands a Baptist named Sicke Snyder (proper name, Freerks) was beheaded for being baptized as a believer. In the Criminal Sentence Book of the Court of Friesland, it reads: "Sicke Freerks, on this 20th of March, 1531, is condemned by the Court to be executed with the sword; his body shall be laid on the wheel, and his head set upon a stake, because he has been rebaptized, and perseveres in that baptism."¹

Twenty years later across the English Channel from 1555 to 1558 (the reign of bloody Queen Mary), 288 Protestant Reformers were burned at the stake. Of these, 1 was an archbishop, 4 were bishops, 21 were clergymen, 55 were women, and 4 were children.² They included John Rogers, John Hooper, Rowland Taylor, Robert Ferrar, Nicholas Ridley, Hugh Latimer, John Philpot, and Thomas Cranmer. Why were they burned by the Roman Catholic Queen? There was one central issue: the meaning of the Lord's Supper.

Here are the words of John Charles Ryle to explain:

The doctrine in question was the real presence of the body and blood of Christ in the consecrated elements of bread and wine in the Lord's Supper. Did they, or did they not believe that the body and blood of Christ were really, that is corporally, literally, locally, and materially, present under the forms of bread and wine after the words of consecration were pronounced? Did they or did they not believe that the real body of Christ, which was born of the Virgin Mary, was present on the so-called altar so soon as the mystical words had passed the lips of the priest? Did they or did they not? That was the simple question. If they did not believe and admit it, they were burned.³

I mention these two facts - the martyrdom of those who held that only believers shall be baptized, and the martyrdom of those who denied that the physical body of Christ was really there in the form of bread and wine - to show that there was once a time when the ordinances of baptism and the Lord's Supper carried meanings that were very important - worth dying for, and some thought, worth killing for.

One of the happy things about being a Baptist - and I only mention it in passing, because it is good to remember it in these volatile days of controversy around the world - is that during the history of our existence, we have never been on the killing side of that transaction.

What Was at Stake?

Perhaps I should give just a brief word about why so much was at stake. With regard to baptism one crucial issue in the 16th century was the relationship between church and state. They were so interwoven that anything which threatened to

distinguish between church and population also threatened the secular-religious authority over the population. If baptism was a voluntary act of a believer, then church would become a free and voluntary assembly. And that would compromise the rule of secular-religious authority over the population as a whole. When Felix Manz was drowned in 1527 in Switzerland for being a Baptist, the court records said, "They do not allow Infant Baptism. In this way they will put an end to secular authority."⁴ In other words, being a Baptist was a capital crime because it was seen as treason against the secular authority.

With regard to the Lord's Supper, the issue was more directly theological, but also political. Would England be a Catholic or a Protestant nation? Both used the sword against the other. So when the Catholics ruled, any serious attack on Roman Catholic doctrine was an attack on the crown. And there was no more serious attack than the rejection of the heart of the Catholic Mass. The heart of the Mass was the real physical, material presence of the incarnate body of Christ in the form of bread and wine. This was essential, not peripheral, because in the consecrating words of the priest another crucial sacrifice happened with this body. This is what the Protestant Reformers saw. And this is what they believed undermined the gospel of Christ crucified once for all for our sins.

Listen to Bishop J. C. Ryle express the Protestant conviction:

Grant for a moment that the Lord's Supper is a sacrifice, and not a sacrament . . . You spoil the blessed doctrine of Christ's finished work when he died on the cross. A sacrifice that needs to be repeated is not a perfect and complete thing. You spoil the priestly office of Christ. If there are priests that can offer an acceptable sacrifice to God besides Him, the great High Priest is robbed of His glory. . . . You overthrow the true doctrine of Christ's human nature. If the body born of the virgin Mary can be in more places than one at the same time, it is not a body like our own, and Jesus was not the "last Adam" in the truth of our nature.⁵

So, as we spend two weeks on this doctrine of the Lord's Supper, let no one say, "What's the big deal?" Rather let us humble ourselves and realize that while we may enjoy freedom of religion in this country, so that no one is burned or beheaded for religious reasons, we may also have lost all sense of the weight and wonder of what Christ has given us in the ordinances of his church. It would do us well to admit that if their age was marked by brutality, ours is marked by superficiality. They may have weighed things differently than we would, but it may be that we have lost the capacity to feel weighty truth at all. [John Piper, Why We Eat The Lord's Supper](#)