

The Doctrine of the Church

# WHAT IS THE SIGNIFICANCE OF BAPTISM & COMMUNION

*And concerning baptism, baptize this way: Having first recounted all these things [instructions on living out the Christian life], baptize into the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit, in living water. But if you have no living water, baptize into other water; and if you cannot do so in cold water, do so in warm. But if you have neither, pour out water three times upon the head into the name of Father and Son and Holy Spirit. But before the baptism let the baptizer fast, and the baptized, and whoever else can; but you shall order the baptized to fast one or two days before.*

—The Didache [The Teaching of the Twelve Apostles], an ancient catechistic church document (~AD100)

One of the things that almost all Christian churches share in common is the practice of baptism and communion. Thus, it would seem that baptism and communion would be a great source of unity among believers. However, in actuality, they are often the source of great division among Christians since churches understand and practice them differently.

Since the Bible is our authority, we should seek to form our understanding and practice of baptism and communion, not from our church tradition, but from what the Bible teaches.

## THE ORDINANCE OF BAPTISM

### 1. Baptism is an act of D\_\_\_\_\_.

*Then those who gladly received his word were baptized; and that day about three thousand souls were added to them. (Acts 2:41)*

*But when they believed Philip as he preached good news about the kingdom of God and the name of Jesus Christ, they were baptized, both men and women. (Acts 8:12)*

*Crispus, the ruler of the synagogue, believed in the Lord, together with his entire household. And many of the Corinthians hearing Paul believed and were baptized. (Acts 18:8)*

### 2. Baptism is by I\_\_\_\_\_.

*After Jesus was baptized, just as He was coming up out of the water, the heavens opened and he saw the Spirit of God descending like a dove and coming to rest on Him. (Matthew 3:16)*

*John also was baptizing at Aenon near Salim, because water was plentiful there, and people were coming and being baptized. (John 3:23)*

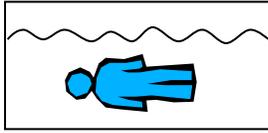
Baptism and communion are the two *ordinances* of the church, *ordained* by Christ for the church to practice. They are also called *sacraments*, meaning that which is *sacred*. Since Catholics define sacraments as giving spiritual merit to people regardless of their faith, the term ordinance is often preferred by Protestants.

Baptism is first mentioned in the Bible in Matthew 3. It seems to reflect Jewish purification rites (cf. Lev. 8:6; 14:8) as well as the practice of immersing proselytes to Judaism in water to wash away their “Gentile-ness.”

**Baptize.** Greek, *baptizo*, “to dip, immerse, submerge” (Thayer).

*It is not at all certain when baptism began to be extended to infants. The first undisputed reference to the custom occurs in North Africa at the beginning of the 3<sup>rd</sup> century in the writings of Tertullian, who disapproves of it. ...It looks as though practice may have preceded doctrine here, perhaps simply as a result of a desire of Christian parents to have their children share in whatever benefits they believed themselves to enjoy as a result of baptism. —Paul F. Bradshaw*

**3. Baptism is a P \_\_\_\_\_ of salvation.**



*Or do you not know that as many of us as were baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into His death? Therefore, we were buried with Him through baptism into death, that just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life.*

—Romans 6:3-4

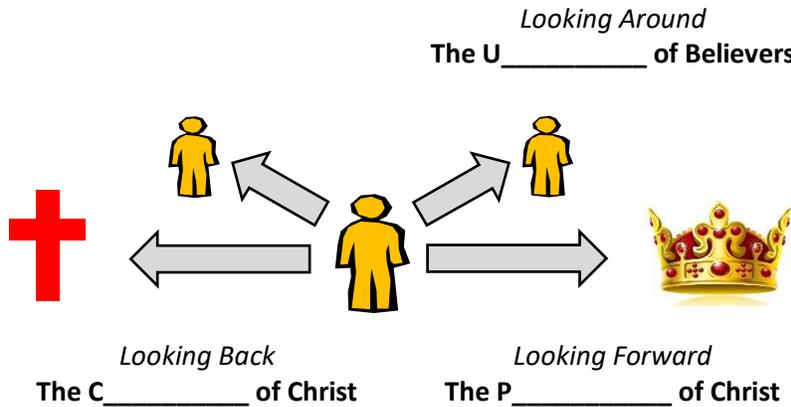


Baptism \_\_\_\_\_ me with Christ.

**THE ORDINANCE OF COMMUNION**

*For I received from the Lord that which I also delivered to you: that the Lord Jesus on the same night in which He was betrayed took bread; and when He had given thanks, He broke it and said, "Take, eat; this is My body which is broken for you; do this in remembrance of Me." In the same manner He also took the cup after supper, saying, "This cup is the new covenant in My blood. This do, as often as you drink it, in remembrance of Me." For as often as you eat this bread and drink this cup, you proclaim the Lord's death till He comes.*

—1 Corinthians 11:23-26



*Day by day continuing with one mind in the temple, and breaking bread from house to house, they were taking their meals together with gladness and sincerity of heart. (Acts 2:46)*

*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 Cor. 11:28-29)*

*"But I say to you, I will not drink of this fruit of the vine from now on until that day when I drink it new with you in My Father's kingdom." (Matt. 26:29)*

*It appears that Paul had both the literal and figurative in mind in this paragraph, for he used the readers' experience of water baptism to remind them of their identification with Christ through the baptism of the Holy Spirit.*

—Warren Wiersbe

*A theological definition of baptism would best be understood in terms of identification.*

—Charles C. Ryrie

Communion is also called the Lord's Supper, being instituted on Jesus' last night with His disciples (cf. Luke 22:7-23), or the Eucharist (from the Greek, *eucharisteo*, "to give thanks").

*No biblical image combines the literal and the figurative, the physical and the spiritual, more inextricably than does the imagery of eating. ...Both literally and figuratively, eating communicates the paradigm of a providential Creator and a dependent humanity. ...Even when a meal was relatively modest, the social meaning of shared eating is that of mutual fellowship and trust.*

—Dictionary of Biblical Imagery

*The Corinthians neglected to examine themselves, but they were experts at examining everybody else.*

—Warren Wiersbe

*The phrase "not discerning the body" means "not understanding the unity and interdependence of people in the church," which is the body of Christ. It means not taking thought for our brothers and sisters when we come to the Lord's Supper, at which we ought to reflect His character.*

—Wayne Grudem