

# THE ORDINANCES OF THE CHURCH

**Matthew 28:19-20 Matthew 26:26-28**

**by Dan Cozart**

My assigned subject is "**The Ordinances of the Church**". There are two texts I would like to read for your hearing. The first one is Matthew 28:19-20, and the other is Matthew 26:26-28.

There are but two ordinances of the New Testament Church. One is the ordinance of Baptism, and the second is the ordinance of the Lord's Supper. There are some Baptist groups which would say there are three ordinances, and the third one is the ordinance of Foot washing. There is, however, no evidence that the early New Testament church practiced this. They practiced Baptism and the Lord's Supper, but not Foot washing as a church ordinance.

Before studying more carefully these two ordinances, I would point out two things by way of introduction. First, they are to be called ordinances and not sacraments. Roman Catholicism and Protestantism call them sacraments, but they do so in error. There is no saving efficacy in either Baptism or the Lord's Supper, and neither do the participants of them indicate grace has been bestowed. They are ordinances and not sacraments.

Also, it is most important to know that they are Church Ordinances and not individual Christian ordinances. They were given to the church, and only the church has the authority to dispense them. No preacher has a right to independently go out and baptize new converts. It must be done by the authority of a local New Testament Church. Neither is the Lord's Supper to be independently administered at weddings, in hospitals, in Rest Homes, or any other place. It is to be observed by the church when the church comes together.

Let us study them in their Scriptural order. First, Baptism, and then the Lord's Supper.

## **THE ORDINANCE OF BAPTISM MATTHEW 28:19-20**

In this text our Lord is giving to His church the Great commission. It is not given to twelve individual disciples, but is given to them collectively as the nucleus of the First New Testament Church. He commissions them to do three things. They were to **Evangelize, Baptize and Catechize**. What did He mean by "baptizing them"?

What does the word *baptize* mean? Our English word is a transliteration of the Greek word *baptizo*. The *o* was dropped, an *e* was added coming across as *baptize*. "Baptize" is never translated sprinkle or pour. It means to dip or immerse. The Greek word for sprinkle is *rantizo*. The Greek word for sprinkle is *echeo*. The word for dip is *baptizo*. You cannot baptize without dipping or immersing. The Greeks consistently used it meaning to dip or immerse. When engaged in a sea battle sinking another ship, they would report "that ship was baptized". The ship was immersed!

The requirements for *baptizo* are clearly set forth in Scripture. (1) It must be done in water (Mark 1:5). (2) It must be done in much water (John 3:23). (3) It involves going down into the water (Acts 8:38). (4) It involves burial in water (Colossians 2:12). (5) It involves coming up out of the water (Mark 1:10).

What, then, does the act of baptism mean? Baptism is a requirement for church membership according to Acts 2:42,47. The 3000 heard the preaching of the Gospel by Simon Peter and they received Christ as Savior and Lord. They were saved, but they were not in the church. It was not until they were baptized that they were added to the church. Thus, baptism becomes the badge of church membership.

Baptism serves as a picture. It gives us a picture of the Gospel. In it we see the death, burial and resurrection of Christ. It also gives us a picture of a sinner coming to Christ. He comes as a dead man needing to be buried. Not only buried, but raised to serve a risen Lord. Furthermore, it pictures the believer's union and identification with Christ. The Lord provided the example and the believer follows it.

There are four qualifications for Scriptural baptism. (1) There must be a **Proper Subject**. That subject is a professed believer in the Lord Jesus. We do not baptize believers, but rather professed believers. Infants and babies do not meet this qualification. The unsaved do not qualify to be baptized. (2) **There must be a Proper Authority**. That authority is the local New Testament Church. This exempts individual baptizings along with religious organizations and orders. (3) There must be a **Proper Purpose**. That purpose is to show salvation, not procure it. Baptismal regeneration is nowhere taught in the Bible. Baptists have always placed the blood before the water. This would disqualify a Campbellite baptism. I was put under the water at age 12 when I went forward in a church. I was not converted until several years later. At that time I requested to be baptized scripturally. Baptism must come after salvation, never before. (4) There must be a Proper Mode. That mode is immersion only. Anything less is not baptism. God does not give us a choice between sprinkling, pouring or immersion. It cannot be baptism without immersion!

Baptism is exemplified in the New Testament. Observe the baptism of our Lord in Matthew 3:13-17. The importance of this act is evident because our Lord walked some 12-15 miles to be immersed. He was not baptized *with* Jordan. He was baptized *in* Jordan. John the Baptist went with our Lord down into the river. This would have been useless if only he was going to sprinkle water over the head of the Saviour. Christ went down into the water. He was placed under the water, and He came up out of the water.

Another example is that of the eunuch in Acts 8:29-39. Phillip preached the gospel to the eunuch but had to wait until they came to a body of water before he could be

baptized. The eunuch had water in his canteen, but it was not enough. It was sufficient enough to sprinkle, but not sufficient enough to bury.

Finally, the Philippian Jailor submitted to believer's baptism in Acts 16:30-33. He did not have to wait for an examination committee to give approval. He did not want to wait for a more convenient season. He agreed to be baptized in the middle of the night.

## **THE ORDINANCE OF THE LORD'S SUPPER MATTHEW 26:26-28**

The bread and the cup have been the subject of much controversy. Again, we must keep in mind that it, like baptism, is an ordinance and not a sacrament. There is no saving efficacy in the Lord's Supper.

There are three major approaches to the meaning of the Lord's Supper: (1) The Roman Catholic view is called Transubstantiation. This view holds that the elements of the supper, namely the bread and the wine are transformed into the literal flesh and blood of Christ. (2) The Lutheran View is called Consubstantiation. Though Martin Luther decried the Catholic position of transubstantiation, he still believed that the presence of Christ was some how present with the ordinance. (3) The Representative View is held by most Protestants and all Baptists. The bread and wine are both symbols in *this* view. The bread represents the body of Christ, while the wine represents His blood. There is no holiness in the elements themselves. Nor does one acquire righteousness by eating the bread and drinking the cup. The purpose is to show forth the death of Christ until He comes again.

R. J. George, in his *Lectures in Pastoral Theology* submits five theories of Church Communion. (1) **There is the Latitudinarian Theory** which has no restrictions. It would admit anyone, whether saved or unsaved, to freely come to the table. No one is denied. (2) There is the **Visible Disciple Theory** which extends the supper to all believers, whether they are members of the church or not. Unbelievers are excluded. (3) The **Restricted Communion** theory would be given to all denominational

churches with Unitarians, Catholics and Universalist excluded. Church membership is a requirement. (4) **The Occasional Communion Theory** which is extended on occasions to believing members of other churches who are providentially separated from their church home. This would also include vacations. (5) **The Close Communion Theory** which is extended only to those of the same local church, and none else.

Among Baptists, and for practical reasons, these views could be reduced to three: (1) Open Communion which is for all who claim to be Christians. (2) Restricted Communion which is offered to Baptists of other Baptist churches. (3) Close Communion which is only for the membership of the local Baptist church.

Concerning Open Communion, Strong in his *Systematic Theology*, page 552, says that this view of Communion logically leads to open church membership, and is virtually an identification of the church with the world, and without protest from Scripturally constituted bodies, would finally result in its actual extinction.

Mr. Strong furthermore states concerning Restricted Communion: "Since baptism is a command of Christ, it follows that we cannot properly commune with the unbaptized. To admit such to the Lord's Supper is to give the symbol of Church fellowship to those who, in spite of the fact that they are Christian brethren, are, though perhaps unconsciously, violating the fundamental law of the church."

J.R. Graves states in *The Lord's Supper*, pages 9-19, concerning Close Communion: "(1) That each church under Christ is absolutely independent. (2) To each local church is committed the sole administration and guardianship of the ordinances. (3) It symbolizes church relation, that is, all who jointly partake are members of the one and self-same church. (4) It was instituted by Christ to be observed as a church ordinance. (5) The Lord's Supper was observed by the apostolic churches (A.D. 100) as a church ordinance..."

In the understanding of this preacher, the only Scriptural view is Close Communion. Christ Jesus established it in the local body of baptized believers, and that is where it should stay. There are several reasons for this: (1) It is a Table of Fellowship. "How can two walk together except they be agreed?" The established doctrine of a church is set by the pulpit of that church in accordance with the Word of God. To invite other believers, though they have been baptized, does not assure unity of doctrine around the table.

(2) It is a Table of Discipline. The local church is made up of believers who are under the subjection and discipline of that local church. Disciplinary problems may come in from another church and, if invited, sit down at the Lord's Table of a church that has no authority over them.

(3) It is a Table of Exclusion. Not even all the members of a local church should partake of the supper. To eat it unworthily is to invite judgment.

There are two tables in the church to which all, believers and unbelievers alike, are invited and welcomed: (1) There is the gospel Table. It is here the Bible is preached and truth declared. All are invited to come and listen. (2) There is the Food Table. When the church has an Agape Feast, all are invited to attend and participate.

There are three tables which should never be shared by the local church with outsiders: (1) The Baptism Table: We do not baptize converts to go to the church of their choice. They are baptized by that local church for entrance into that local church membership only. (2) The Business Table: When a church conducts a business conference, outsiders are not invited to participate. (3) The Lord's Supper Table: When a local church observes the Lord's Supper, it is designed for members only. Each local church does business with God around its own local church ordinance.

Now, let us look particularly at the Lord's Supper Observance, as is set forth in I Corinthians 11:18-34.

(1) It is an exhortation (vs. 24). "*Take eat*" and "*this do*." To whom is this directed? The answer is found in Verse 18. The writer makes a distinction in "churches of God" in vs. 16, and "church" singular in verse 18. It is a local church setting and not a general one for believers everywhere.

(2) It is a commemoration... "*in remembrance of Me*." We must remember His sinlessness when tempted (Hebrews 4:15), His silence when tried (Isaiah 53:7), His suffering when crucified (I Peter 2:21), His sorrow when forsaken (Matthew 27:46, and His substitution when He died (Isaiah 53:6).

(3) It is a declaration (vs. 26). "*You do shew*" or declare...The Lord's Supper preaches the death of Jesus Christ (John 6:53).

(4) It is a duration (vs.. 25-26). It says "*As oft as you eat and drink*". We are to do it often and frequently, and until the Second Coming of Christ (Matthew 26:29). It will culminate and be observed for the final time in the personal presence of our Lord when He returns and establishes the Kingdom on earth.

(5) It is an investigation (vs. 28) where it says "*Let a man examine himself*." It is a time when every believer should judge himself (vs. 31). First, this investigation concerns one's conversion and baptism. This is an ordinance for baptized believers. Second, this investigation concerns one's catechism (vs.. 18-19). We must continue in the Apostle's doctrine as well as the breaking of bread. We must not rebel against any truth of Scripture. Thirdly, this investigation concerns the believer's conduct (vs.. 29-33), It is a time, not only for recognizing sin, but confessing and repenting of sin. "Lord, is it I?"

In conclusion, we see the New Testament church has two ordinances to be observed....that of baptism after conversion, and the Lord's Supper after baptism. Buell H. Kazee has correctly stated in *The Church and the Ordinances*, page 94, that "Baptism guards the door to the church; the Lord's Supper keeps the body in spiritual discipline."

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