

## SESSION 9

# THE ORDINANCES

IN THIS SESSION, WE WILL EXAMINE the two ordinances of the church: baptism and the Lord's Supper. The baptism of a believer symbolizes our union with Christ in His death and resurrection. The Lord's Supper is a meal that proclaims Christ's death until He returns. Baptism marks us out as God's people, and the Lord's Supper is the meal we continually celebrate as God's people. Both of these events are signs to the world that Jesus Christ is Lord.

### STEPS TO PREPARE

1. Read the main passages for this study, recording your insights and questions:
  - ▷ 1 Corinthians 11:17-32
  - ▷ Colossians 2:9-15
2. Review the Teaching Plan (pp.94-97).
  - ▷ Refine the lesson plan based on your group's particular needs.
  - ▷ Adjust the plan if necessary.
3. Study the Expanded Lesson Content (pp.98-103).
  - ▷ Determine what elements of this lesson are most applicable to your particular group.
  - ▷ Consider ways to personalize the lesson content for you and your class.
4. Pray for the Lord's guidance as you lead your group through this material.

### LESSON OUTLINE

**AS THE CHURCH, CHRISTIANS...**

- 1. Symbolize union with Christ through baptism (Col. 2:9-15).**
- 2. Proclaim Christ's death through the Lord's Supper (1 Cor. 11:17-32).**



**CONVEY****AS THE CHURCH, CHRISTIANS...****1. SYMBOLIZE UNION WITH CHRIST THROUGH BAPTISM.**

Mention the contrast between circumcision and baptism. Then ask a volunteer to read Colossians 2:9-15. Explain the meaning of the passage, that spiritual circumcision in Christ is what matters for salvation, and this is visualized in the picture of baptism (p.99).



At this point, consider using the story “My Baptism” in the Personal Study Guide (p.79) as a way to illustrate this point. A brief synopsis has been provided for you in the sidebar.



*If you have been baptized, what meaning and emotions do you remember about that day?*

Explain what baptism represents. Use the picture of marriage to illustrate that baptism doesn't create faith but confesses faith in Christ.



*How should baptism affect the way we view ourselves and the choices we make as believers?*

Show how baptism is a congregational event, leading to rejoicing in the salvation of the new believer and refocusing the church on its missional purpose given in the Great Commission (pp.100-101).



*Why do you think Jesus commanded His disciples to baptize new believers?*

**2. PROCLAIM CHRIST'S DEATH THROUGH THE LORD'S SUPPER.**

Read 1 Corinthians 11:17-32, and mention the three aspects of renewal the Lord's Supper was designed to address: renew believers' affections for Christ, for each other, and for Christ's future coming (pp.101-103).



At this point, consider using the story “Communion” in the Personal Study Guide (p.80) as a way to illustrate this point. A brief synopsis has been provided for you in the sidebar.



*How does the Lord's Supper provide a picture of salvation through Christ?*

**MY BAPTISM**

*I was baptized at 12 years old. I remember the day very clearly. I'll never forget the experience of going under and coming out of the water. It was such an important and memorable day. Baptism is a beautiful picture of salvation. It is an outward expression of an inward commitment to Christ. Through baptism, we acknowledge our new life in Christ in the presence His body.*

► *Does watching the baptisms of others make you thankful for your own salvation? Explain.*

**COMMUNION**

*We are a busy people, and finding time for introspection can be difficult. Having several moments of silent prayer before receiving each element in the Lord's Supper is very helpful. Partaking in the Lord's Supper is a serious thing. It should not be taken lightly. As we participate in the Lord's Supper as a body of believers, we have opportunity to remember the enormity of what Christ has done for us. In addition, we celebrate the resurrection. We look forward to what Christ will do. He will return one day and make all things right.*

► *Do you take the Lord's Supper seriously? Explain.*

## NOTES:

**Renews Believers' Affections for Christ.** Show how the Corinthian church was self-interested and segregated in their practice of the Lord's Supper, but the atmosphere for the Lord's Supper should be awe and praise of Christ. Explain how we should take time for self-examination both prior to and during the rite (which is reserved for Christians) so we don't take it in an "unworthy" way (p.102).



*What are some ways we can examine ourselves before and during the observance of the Lord's Supper?*



*How should we respond to finding sin in our hearts before God and/or against others?*

• **Renews Believers' Affections for Each Other.** Explain how the Supper physically provides an opportunity for Christians to consider their brothers and sisters in Christ, both locally and globally. The Supper combats individualism and encourages unity for God's mission (p.102).



*What is the significance of sharing a meal with someone?*

• **Renews Believers' Affections for Christ's Second Coming.** Address the future-looking aspect of the Lord's Supper as we observe the rite until the Lord comes again. We look forward to celebrating the marriage supper of the Lamb when Christ Himself will be with His people (p.103).



*How should looking back at the crucifixion in the Lord's Supper encourage believers in their faith?*



*How can Christians intentionally look forward to Christ's second coming through participating in the Lord's Supper?*



## EXPANDED LESSON CONTENT

**THE ORDINANCES**

AS THE CHURCH, CHRISTIANS SYMBOLIZE UNION WITH CHRIST THROUGH BAPTISM AND PROCLAIM CHRIST'S DEATH THROUGH THE LORD'S SUPPER.

## OPENING ILLUSTRATION AND DISCUSSION STARTER



A symbol represents something. It stands in for another object or idea and can take the form of a word, sound, gesture, thing, or image. For example, around the world, the “golden arches” are synonymous with the fast-food giant McDonald’s. In 1968, the six-year-old franchise introduced the “M” as its official symbol, which would become iconic for the entire globe.

The golden arches are so recognizable in society that the vast majority of people understand what the symbol stands for even if it’s not elevated near one of their 300,000 (plus) restaurants. The power of the symbol,

however, does not come from the arches themselves but rather from the fact that many people on earth have tasted a Quarter Pounder, a Big Mac, or experienced McDonald’s Playland. The arches simply point us to the reality of McDonald’s itself. In fact, the corporation relies on the symbol to conjure up fond dining memories that are so real you can taste them.



*What are some important symbols in society? What do these symbols communicate?*

The Christian faith also has its symbols, and the power of those symbols comes not from themselves but in what they represent. Specifically, two symbols were given by Jesus to point us to the reality of Christ Himself: baptism and the Lord’s Supper. Throughout the history of the church, a conversation has continued about the nature and purpose of these ordinances. Nevertheless, we can affirm that they were given to the church as a means of constantly drawing the minds and hearts of believers back to the person and work of Christ. They offer believers an opportunity to remember Christ’s sacrifice and to celebrate what He has done on our behalf.

**VOICES FROM CHURCH HISTORY**

The Lord Jesus Christ addresses his church, not only in the language of Scripture, rich with the symbolism of revelation, but also through the... signs he has appointed.<sup>1</sup>

—Edmund P. Clowney

# AS THE CHURCH, CHRISTIANS...

## 1. SYMBOLIZE UNION WITH CHRIST THROUGH BAPTISM (COL. 2:9-15).

When we read the Scriptures, we find multiple occasions when Old Testament practices are contrasted with New Testament counterparts. One such occasion involves the rites of circumcision and baptism. The circumcision of the flesh in the Old Testament to mark out the people of God becomes the circumcision of the heart in the New Testament, foretold by Moses (Deut. 30:6) and illustrated in baptism (Col. 2:11-12).

*For the entire fullness of God's nature dwells bodily in Christ, and you have been filled by Him, who is the head over every ruler and authority. You were also circumcised in Him with a circumcision not done with hands, by putting off the body of flesh, in the circumcision of the Messiah. Having been buried with Him in baptism, you were also raised with Him through faith in the working of God, who raised Him from the dead. And when you were dead in trespasses and in the uncircumcision of your flesh, He made you alive with Him and forgave us all our trespasses. He erased the certificate of debt, with its obligations, that was against us and opposed to us, and has taken it out of the way by nailing it to the cross. He disarmed the rulers and authorities and disgraced them publicly; He triumphed over them by Him. (Col. 2:9-15)*

This passage first highlights the fullness and sufficiency of divinity that dwells in the bodily form of Christ—Jesus is fully God (see Col. 1:15-20). Paul declared that the believer, who is filled by Christ, has been buried with Christ and also raised with Him “through faith in the working of God, who raised Him from the dead” (Col. 2:12). Paul was saying that the resurrection power that raised Christ from the dead is the same power that lives in every follower of Jesus. This begins to paint the picture of what is portrayed in baptism.

In verse 11, Paul borrowed the concept of circumcision to describe union with Christ. This use of circumcision, however, was intended to contrast with the Mosaic law, to illustrate a change in how one portrays belonging to God from the Old Testament to the New. In the Old Testament, circumcision was an external sign that demonstrated participation in God's covenant with Israel. But Paul's contrast between physical circumcision and spiritual circumcision (“not done with hands”) shows that identification with the people of God is no longer an external mark but an internal reality. We belong to God because we are in Christ, who was cut off for our sin through His death on the cross (“the circumcision of the Messiah”)!

Verse 12 describes how we identify with Christ in the New Testament. Here Paul summarized a demonstration of one's saving faith through the means of baptism. The picture of baptism involves a person being submerged in a pool of water. The word *baptism* is from the Greek word *baptizō*, and it means “to immerse.” In the era of the early church, *baptizō* was used to

## FURTHER COMMENTARY

*Paul here uses circumcision metaphorically for a spiritual (made without hands) action, which he describes as putting off the body of the flesh. Believers no longer live in the sphere of the flesh and its influence (Gal. 5:24) but have been transferred to the kingdom of Christ and live through and in him, under his lordship (Col. 1:13). In this 'circumcision' performed by Christ, Christians have been removed from their solidarity with Adam and his sin (see Rom. 6:6) and are now in solidarity with Christ and His righteousness and can live for Him, as they before could not. In a second metaphor drawn from Christ's work on the cross, Paul says that the Christian rite of baptism represents an identification with Christ in His death (cf. Rom. 6:4-6) along with an identification with Christ in His resurrection (cf. Eph. 2:6). Dying and rising with Christ signifies death to the power of sin and Satan plus empowerment to live the new life that Jesus calls believers to live in imitation of Him (see Rom. 6:3-11).<sup>2</sup>*

—Clinton E. Arnold

## VOICES FROM THE CHURCH

Baptism is important precisely because it is tied to the gospel, to the saving work that Christ accomplished in His death and resurrection.<sup>3</sup>

—Thomas R. Schreiner and Shawn D. Wright

## FURTHER COMMENTARY

*Baptism, therefore, implies a sharing in Christ's resurrection as well as in His death and burial. The resurrection of Christ is held forth by Paul as the supreme demonstration of the power of God. Those who have been raised with Christ have been raised through faith in the divine power which brought Him back from the dead, and from now on that power energizes them and maintains the new life within them—the new life which is nothing less than Christ's resurrection life flowing through all the members of his body.<sup>4</sup>*

—F. F. Bruce

## VOICES FROM CHURCH HISTORY

If now a person who has been brought through the Word of God to recognition of his sin confesses himself to be a sinner, and is further taught by the Word of God that he should call upon God the Father for the forgiveness of his sin for the sake of Christ, and if he does that in faith and does not doubt anything, then God has cleansed his heart in this faith and trust and has remitted him all his sin...[I]n order to manifest to other believers in Christ his heart, mind, faith, and intention, he joins their brotherhood and churches, [and] accepts and gives a public testimony of his internal faith and lets himself be baptized with water.<sup>6</sup>

—Balthasar Hubmaier

describe the process of washing or dyeing clothes. When the Christian is submerged beneath the water, it depicts a burial, indicating that the believer has embraced the death of Christ for his or her sin. The Christian's emergence from the water represents the resurrection of Christ that brings new life to His followers. Romans 6:4 says, "Just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, so we too may walk in a new way of life."

The parallels that can be found between circumcision and baptism are helpful, but there is an important distinction to note for the sake of our mission. In the Old Testament, physical circumcision was intimately linked with national identity because every boy in Israel was expected to be circumcised when he was eight days old. Every male in the Hebrew family shared this defining mark of the covenant. In the New Testament, baptism is not linked to national identity but to the death, burial, and resurrection of Christ Himself. Our identity as Christians is not found in a nation but in a Person.



*If you have been baptized, what meaning and emotions do you remember about that day?*

In the verses above, Paul communicated an important progression that occurs prior to being baptized. First, we are filled with Christ as a mark of salvation (Col. 2:10); this is the circumcision of the heart (v. 11). Only then are we "buried with [Christ] in baptism...raised with Him through faith in the working of God" (v. 12). Baptism is a powerfully dramatic external sign of an internal reality.

Baptism is helpfully illustrated with the picture of marriage. Two people are drawn together in a relationship, and over time they become ready to commit themselves to one another. The wedding that transpires is a public celebration in which their commitment to one another is celebrated, confessed, and confirmed. This event does not create their mutual love but expresses and seals their decision to love. Likewise, baptism does not create faith or union with Christ, but it confesses and celebrates the faith one has in Christ.<sup>5</sup>



*How should baptism affect the way we view ourselves and the choices we make as believers?*

The beauty of baptism is that it is not just for the person being baptized; the whole congregation participates in the event too. In the Book of Acts, baptism was a declaration of faith in Christ that identified the new believer with the community of faith. Baptism is also a time when the church rejoices because another person has been snatched from the grip of death and is clinging to hope in the triumphant Christ. The power and testimony of this reality is communicated in Col. 2:13-15, where life, forgiveness, and power are evident through what Jesus accomplished in His death on the cross. Lastly, baptism refocuses the church on its missional purpose given in the Great Commission,

reminding believers of their salvation and of the fact that God is still building His church (Matt. 28:18-20).



*How would you explain the need for and purpose of baptism to a new believer?*

## 2. PROCLAIM CHRIST'S DEATH THROUGH THE LORD'S SUPPER (1 COR. 11:17-32).

*Now in giving the following instruction I do not praise you, since you come together not for the better but for the worse. For to begin with, I hear that when you come together as a church there are divisions among you, and in part I believe it. There must, indeed, be factions among you, so that those who are approved may be recognized among you. Therefore, when you come together, it is not really to eat the Lord's Supper. For at the meal, each one eats his own supper ahead of others. So one person is hungry while another gets drunk! Don't you have houses to eat and drink in? Or do you look down on the church of God and embarrass those who have nothing? What should I say to you? Should I praise you? I do not praise you for this! For I received from the Lord what I also passed on to you: On the night when He was betrayed, the Lord Jesus took bread, gave thanks, broke it, and said, "This is My body, which is for you. Do this in remembrance of Me." In the same way, after supper He also took the cup and said, "This cup is the new covenant established by 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. Therefore, whoever eats the bread or drinks the cup of the Lord in an unworthy way will be guilty of sin against the body and blood of the Lord. So a man should examine himself; in this way he should eat the bread and drink from the cup. For whoever eats and drinks without recognizing the body, eats and drinks judgment on himself. This is why many are sick and ill among you, and many have fallen asleep. If we were properly evaluating ourselves, we would not be judged, but when we are judged, we are disciplined by the Lord, so that we may not be condemned with the world. (1 Cor. 11:17-32)*

The Lord's Supper is a time of renewal for God's people, yet at the time Paul wrote his First Letter to the Corinthians, renewal was the opposite of what occurred in the Corinthian church during this sacred ceremony. The Lord's Supper was designed to renew believers' affections for Christ, for each other, and for Christ's future coming; each of these purposes are referenced in the text above. As we explore these three aspects of renewal, notice how countercultural the Lord's Supper is for our day.



*How does the Lord's Supper provide a picture of salvation through Christ?*

## VIEWS OF BAPTISM

### Views of Baptism

Evangelical churches fall into two major camps as it relates to baptism: proponents of believer's baptism and paedobaptism.

- **Believer's Baptism:** This position holds that baptism is properly administered only to those who have given a believable profession of faith in the Lord Jesus Christ. The mode of immersion in water serves as a symbol of beginning the Christian life through death to sin and self and resurrection to new life. Believer's baptism is practiced in Baptist, Assembly of God, Church of God, Pentecostal, and many non-denominational churches.

- **Paedobaptism:** This view holds that baptism is rightly administered to all infant children of believing parents. The word paedobaptism means the practice of baptizing infants. This conviction is sometimes called "covenantal" because it depends on seeing infants born to believers as part of the "covenant community" of God's people. Paedobaptism is practiced in Lutheran, Episcopalian, Methodist, Presbyterian, and Reformed churches.<sup>7</sup>

## FURTHER COMMENTARY

*A person must examine himself with respect to Christ's sacrifice for believers and the relationship each believer has within the corporate body. The phrase 'whoever eats and drinks without recognizing the body' is a solemn wordplay on the word 'body.' Believers are to recognize that Jesus selflessly sacrificed His body for others and that this sacrifice was designed to make Christians a selfless corporate body. If the Corinthian believers judged and examined themselves correctly, this would avert judgment from God within the corporate body. 'Asleep' is a term Paul and other biblical authors use for physical death.<sup>8</sup>*

—F. Alan Tomlinson

## VOICES FROM CHURCH HISTORY

First, let all the church assemble together for the observance of this Supper. Then exercise three faculties—memory, faith, hope...Faith present discerns Christ dying for the remission of sins [as represented through the symbols]; memory looks back to Christ dying on the cross for the remission of sins; hope looks forward to the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, His final advent. That isn't a hard sermon to remember.<sup>9</sup>

—B. H. Carroll

### Renews Believers' Affections for Christ

Concerning the renewal of the believer's affections for Christ, the division Paul addressed in verse 18 is evidence that the Corinthian church did not "Do this in remembrance of Me." Their "worship" was self-interested and segregated, focused exclusively on the in-crowd of the church.

By contrast, remembering the broken body and shed blood of Christ with the elements of the Supper should spark a renewal of passion for Christ, and this ought to re-center the life of the individual and the community around the cross.

So what is the proper method for observing the Lord's Supper? The term "unworthy" implies an expectation that the ceremony be observed in a worthy way, one that intimately recognizes the character and nature of Jesus and His sacrifice for our salvation. Therefore, the Lord's Supper is reserved for baptized believers. It is a special opportunity for the Christian to search his or her heart for barriers that stand in the way of Christ being ultimate in one's life. The Supper can aid these contemplative moments because the tangible reminder of Christ's sacrifice should stir our affections for Him in a unique way.



*What are some ways we can examine ourselves before and during the observance of the Lord's Supper?*



*How should we respond to finding sin in our hearts before God and/or against others?*

### Renews Believers' Affections for Each Other

The Supper is also a time for the body of Christ to look around at those who are their brothers and sisters in Christ, both locally and globally.

In a growing number of places around the world, Christians find their surroundings increasingly antagonistic toward the faith, and spiritual warfare is ever-present. The Supper gives believers an opportunity to encourage and be encouraged by their fellow brothers and sisters who are also on the front lines for Christ, remembering that this present world is not our home (Heb. 13:14).

The Supper combats individualism as the cancer that it is. Conventional and biblical wisdom are true—"No man is an island," as wrote John Donne, the 17<sup>th</sup>-century poet. The display of unity focused on God's mission is part and parcel to the Lord's Supper; this is why Paul rebuked the Corinthian church concerning their division.



*What connection does the Lord's Supper have with our evangelistic proclamation of the Lord's death?*

### Renews Believers' Affections for Christ's Second Coming

Communion also allows believers the opportunity to look forward to the time when the Lord's Supper will no longer be necessary (1 Cor. 11:26b). In the new heavens and new earth, there will be no need for a symbolic representation of Christ's sacrifice because Christ Himself will be with His people (see Rev. 21:3-14; cf. 1 Cor. 13:12). In essence, with the Lord's Supper the church is able to practice for that day when we will participate in *the* meal that all other meals point toward—the marriage supper of the Lamb (Rev. 19:1-9).



*How should looking back at the crucifixion in the Lord's Supper encourage believers in their faith?*



*How can Christians intentionally look forward to Christ's second coming through participating in the Lord's Supper?*

### CONCLUSION

Baptism and the Lord's Supper are both occasions that point the church Christ-ward in the midst of the daily grind of life. In baptism, the church declares its unity in Christ's death, burial, and resurrection. With the Lord's Supper, we look back to the cross of Christ and forward to a time when we will see Him face to face.

In these ordinances, let us be encouraged as the church by all that Christ has done for us, taking away our sin and giving us a new, eternal life to live for His honor and glory. But let us also be reminded of our mission to make disciples who will share in these celebrations with us.

### VOICES FROM THE CHURCH

Joining in the Lord's Supper in the spirit of the world that put Christ to death means that they will be condemned with the world. Eating the Supper with the spirit of Christ means salvation and requires loving behavior toward others.<sup>10</sup>

—David E. Garland

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