

LESSON ESSENTIALS

CHRISTIAN LIFE AND WORLDVIEW

LESSON 6: BAPTISM AND THE LORD'S SUPPER

Observing baptism and communion remind us of God's unending love which led to the sacrifice of Jesus Christ on the cross. They are important symbols of our belief and allow us to remember our salvation and proclaim our faith in Jesus to save us.

Baptism and communion are the two sacraments – or important rituals – that Jesus Christ asked the believing church to practice.

The church follows two instructions that our Lord Jesus Christ has asked us to abide by. That is, Baptism and the Lord's Supper.

"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

As a community, a church comes together for many reasons. A church may have regular times of worship, teaching, prayer or encouragement – but there are two special activities we engage in as a church which Jesus commanded us to observe: baptism and the lord's supper. Let us look closely at these practices to find out why we are asked to adhere to these as a church and what they mean to the community of believers.

Baptism is a public proclamation of a person's personal decision to follow Christ. As Romans 6:3-4 indicates, "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". The act of baptizing by water immersion and rising from the water signifies that just as Christ died, was buried and resurrected, we too are being put to death, being buried and resurrected. As a believer and follower of Christ our old self is put to death and buried, and we are resurrected with a new nature in us. Baptism is a symbol to declare the transformation that has taken place in a believer.

Some groups of Christians will practice baptism by sprinkling or pouring water, while others dip an individual fully into a pool of water when available. Some churches will baptize infants as a sign that they are joining the community of faith – while others insist that those baptized must be able to confess their faith in Jesus Christ and are therefore baptized as adults. Either way we must understand that baptism is an ordinance that is commanded by Jesus. It in itself does not have the ability to save us, wash our sins away or seal us for salvation. It is a sign of the spiritual process which God Himself must accomplish in us.

In the New Testament, the early converts were all baptized. Philip went on preaching and baptizing people irrespective of age, gender, or race as mentioned in Acts 8:12, "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 also talks about Philip baptizing the Ethiopian eunuch who believed that Jesus Christ is the Son of God. Baptism is for anyone who has repented, believed and accepted the Lord Jesus Christ as their savior and Lord. Being baptized is a statement of our belief in Jesus and our belonging to Him.

Jesus also instructed us to participate in communion—The Lord's Supper. It is mentioned in Luke 22:19-20, "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." The verse clearly mentions that Christ asked us to partake in the Lord's Supper in remembrance of him. The bread denotes Christ's body which suffered on the cross of Calvary for our sins. Similarly, the cup denotes the blood that was shed for the redemption of our sins. Taking part in communion helps us to remember the price that Christ paid to save us from our sins.

Acts 2:42 brings to our notice that the early church participated in the Lord's Supper whenever they fellowshiped with each other, just as Jesus and the twelve disciples fellowshiped over communion in Luke 22.

Even today, twenty centuries after the early church participated in the sacraments, the present church also celebrates baptism and the Lord's Supper in remembrance of Christ's sacrifice. Both of these are important actions for us to take with other believers for our own faith, the strengthening of the church and the proclamation of the Gospel.

The early Christians remembered Christ's sacrifice together as a community of believers through the practice of baptism and the Lord's Supper.

IN REVIEW

- Baptism is a public sign of repentance and acceptance of Christ in our lives.
- It symbolizes the death of our old selves, a burial, and a resurrection into a new creation similar to Christ's death, burial, and resurrection.
- Communion is sharing a symbolic meal similar to the bread and cup as Jesus shared with His disciples. We are instructed to do so in order to remind ourselves of the atonement of Christ on our behalf through His death and resurrection.
- Baptism and Communion are sacraments we ought to practice as an act of obedience as Christ has instructed in Luke 22: 19-20 and Matt 28: 18-20.

HAVE YOUR SAY

- Have you proclaimed your faith in Jesus by following the instruction of Baptism?
- In 1Cor. 11: 27 – 29, why does Paul ask us to examine ourselves before we partake in the Holy Communion?
- What did Jesus do before he gave the bread and the cup to the disciples as per Luke 22: 19 and 20?
- Do the sacraments of baptism and communion have any significance in your life? If so what are the ways they can impact you and the people around you?

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