

Covenant Life Fellowship: Kingdom 101

Session 4: Our Ordinances

The word "ordinance" refers to those things that were "ordained" by Christ to be permanently observed by the church.

Jesus never asked His disciples to remember His birth. But He did instruct them to remember His death and resurrection. He gave the church two visible symbols (called "ordinances") as reminders of His death. These two ordinances are: Baptism and The Lord's Supper.

VARIOUS VIEWS ON ORDINANCES

1. Roman Catholic.

Catholic theology uses the term "sacrament" instead of ordinance. There are 7 sacraments that they observe: Baptism, Confirmation, Eucharist, Penance and Reconciliation, Anointing of the Sick, Holy Orders, and Matrimony. They are viewed as practices that "mediate grace" and that through them, divine life is bestowed.

2. Eastern Orthodox.

Eastern Orthodoxy typically view the sacraments not so much as dispensers of grace but as a means of communing with God and as a means of entering into participation in heavenly things while still on this earth. The Orthodox Church typically does not limit the number of sacraments, viewing all encounters with reality in life as sacramental in some sense.

3. Classic Protestant.

Protestants do not use the term "sacraments" because they believe these rituals are outward expressions of faith, rather than impartations of God's grace. Most Protestant denominations affirm only water baptism and the Lord's Supper as ordinances although they may practice anointing of the sick, ordination, marriage, etc.

Note: We embrace our Catholic and Orthodox brothers and recognize that it is a relationship with Christ that is most important, not an agreement on all doctrines. The issue of ordinances reveals the classic difference between Protestantism and Catholicism. The Reformation was based on the fact that the Scriptures alone are our source of authority. The Catholic Church recognizes two authorities: the Scriptures and the Church. While there are glaring differences, we still appreciate the contribution that the Catholic and Orthodox churches have made in preserving many of the foundational doctrines of our faith without compromise. While we teach differently, we do not participate in the ridicule of those who differ in their expression of faith in Christ.

THE IMPORTANCE OF BEING BAPTIZED

“Whoever calls upon the name of the Lord will be saved.” Romans 10:13

I. WHY SHOULD I BE BAPTIZED?

1. TO FOLLOW THE EXAMPLE SET BY _____

“At that time Jesus came from Nazareth and was baptized by John in the river.” Mark 1:9

2. BECAUSE CHRIST _____ IT.

“Jesus said, ‘Go then, to all people everywhere and **make them my disciples**, baptize them in the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit, and **then teach them** to obey everything I have commanded you.’” Matt. 28:19-20

3. IT DEMONSTRATES THAT I REALLY AM A _____

“...many of the people who heard Him **believed** and were **baptized.**” Acts 18:8

“We know that we have come to know Him, if we **obey** His commands.” 1 John 2:3

II. WHAT IS THE MEANING OF BAPTISM?

1. IT ILLUSTRATES CHRIST’S _____ AND RESURRECTION

“Christ died for our sins... He was buried...and He rose again.” 1 Cor. 15:3-4

“For when you are **baptized**, you were **buried** with Christ, and in baptism you were also **raised** with Christ. Col. 2:12

2. IT ILLUSTRATES MY _____ AS A CHRISTIAN.

“When someone becomes a Christian he becomes a brand new person inside. The old life has passed away and a new life has begun!” 2 Corinthians 5:17

“By our baptism then, we were buried with Him and shared His death, in order that, just as Christ was **raised** from the dead...so also **we may live a new life!**” Romans 6:4

Baptism doesn’t make you a believer — it shows that **you already believe**. Baptism does not “save” you, only your faith in Christ does that. Baptism is like a wedding ring — it’s the outward symbol of the commitment you made in your heart.

“For it is by grace you have been saved, **through faith**...it is the gift of God — not by works, so that no one can boast.” Ephesians 2:8-9

III. WHY BE BAPTIZED BY IMMERSION?

BECAUSE _____ WAS BAPTIZED THAT WAY.

"As soon as Jesus was baptized, He went up out of the water." Matthew 3:16

EVERY BAPTISM IN THE _____ WAS BY IMMERSION.

Example: "...then both Philip and the man went down into the water and Philip baptized him. When they came up out of the water..." Acts 8:38-39

THE WORD "BAPTIZE" MEANS TO _____ WATER".

The Greek word baptizo means, "to immerse or dip under water".

IT BEST SYMBOLIZES A BURIAL AND RESURRECTION!

The founders of denominations agree:

Martin Luther..."I would have those who are to be baptized to be entirely immersed, as the word imports and the mystery signifies."

John Calvin..."The word 'baptize' signifies to immerse. It is certain that immersion was the practice of the ancient church."

John Wesley..."Buried with Him, alludes to baptizing by immersion according to the custom of the first church."

Note: Exceptions may be made to immersion if the baptismal candidate is physically unable to deal with climbing in and out of the baptistery. In such cases, sprinkling is an acceptable substitute.

IV. WHO SHOULD BE BAPTIZED?

EVERY PERSON WHO HAS _____ IN CHRIST.

"Those who **believed** and accepted His message were **baptized**..." Acts 2:41

"Simon himself **believed** and was **baptized**..." Acts 8:13

"But **when they believed** Philip as he preached the Good News...and the name of Jesus Christ, **they were baptized**, both men and women." Acts 8:12

At Covenant Life, we wait until our children are old enough to **believe** and understand the true meaning of baptism before we baptize them.

Some churches practice a "baptism of confirmation" for children. This ceremony is intended to be a covenant between the parents and God on the behalf of the child. The parents promise to raise their child in the faith until the child is old enough to make his own personal confession of Christ. This custom began about 300 years after the Bible was completed. **This is different**

from the baptism talked about in the Bible, which was only for those old enough to believe. The purpose is to publicly confess your personal commitment to Christ.

At Covenant Life, we believe that baptism should follow our commitment to Christ. It is a membership requirement.

V. WHEN SHOULD I BE BAPTIZED?

AS SOON AS YOU HAVE BELIEVED!

“Those who believed...were baptized...**that day!**” Acts 2:41

“Then Philip began with the scripture and told him the Good News about Jesus. As they traveled along the road, they came to some water, and the man said, ‘Look, here is water! Why shouldn’t I be baptized right now?’ Philip said, ‘If you believe with all your heart, you may.’ The man answered, ‘I believe that Jesus Christ is the Son of God.’ So they went down into the water and Philip baptized him.” Acts 8:35-38

There is no reason to delay. As soon as you have decided to receive Christ into your life, you can be baptized. If you wait until you are “perfect”, you’ll never feel “good enough”!

CAN MY FAMILY BE BAPTIZED TOGETHER?

Yes! If each family member understands fully the meaning of baptism, and each one has personally placed his/her trust in Christ for salvation, we encourage families to be baptized at the same time. It is a wonderful expression of commitment.

However, it is important to remember that baptism is a personal statement of faith, not a family tradition. It is usually not wise to delay your baptism while waiting on other family members to accept Christ, particularly children. This puts an undue pressure on them, and delays your obedience.

WHAT SHOULD I WEAR WHEN I AM BAPTIZED?

Men and women should loose fitting clothes that will not be “see through” when wet. Bring a change of clothes, a towel, and a plastic bag for your wet clothes. We provide changing rooms.

WILL I HAVE TO SAY ANYTHING?

If you want to, it is appropriate to share a brief testimony or make a confession of your faith. The act of baptism itself is a confession of your faith. At some point in the service, the meaning of baptism will be briefly explained. You will be seated near the baptistry and await your turn to be baptized. Pastor Craig will introduce you, briefly lower you just under the water, and then you can leave the pool, dry off, and watch the others. Later you will be given a certificate of your baptism. We encourage you to invite all your relatives and friends to attend your baptism.

THE MEANING OF THE LORD'S SUPPER

The Lord's Supper is an object lesson that represents a great spiritual truth for believers.

I. WHAT IS THE LORD'S SUPPER? (1 COR. 11:23-26)

1. IT IS A _____

"The Lord Jesus, on the night He was betrayed, took bread..." (vs. 23)

2. IT IS A _____

"...and when He had given thanks, He broke it and said, 'This is my body, which is for you; eat it in remembrance of me.'" (vs. 24)

3. IT IS A _____

"In the same way, He took the cup, saying, 'This cup is the new covenant in my blood; drink it to remember me.'" (vs. 25)

4. IT IS A _____

"For whenever you eat the bread and drink the cup, you proclaim the Lord's death until He comes back." (vs. 26)

II. WHO SHOULD TAKE THE LORD'S SUPPER?

Only those who are already _____ (Mark 14:22-26)

"For anyone who eats and drinks without recognizing the body of the Lord eats and drinks judgment upon himself." 2 Cor. 11:29

III. HOW DO I PREPARE MYSELF FOR THE LORD'S SUPPER?

"Therefore whoever eats the bread or drinks the cup of the Lord in an unworthy manner will be guilty of sinning against the body and blood of the Lord. A person ought to examine himself before he eats of the bread and drinks of the cup." 1 Cor. 11:27-28

By...

1. Self-Examination

1 Cor. 11:27

2. Confessing My Sins

1 John 1:9

3. Recommitment

Rom. 12:1

4. Restoring Relationships

Matt. 5:23-24

IV. WHEN AND HOW OFTEN SHOULD WE OBSERVE THE LORD'S SUPPER?

Some churches observe the Lord's Supper only once a year on Passover night. Others observe it every time they gather. Jesus never said when or how often believers should observe The Lord's Supper. He instituted it on a Thursday night.

We generally observe the Lord's Supper on the first Sunday morning of the month. This is sometimes changed if it fits better with a certain service theme or if we have scheduled a guest speaker.