

Sound Living

Tangible Elements

Baptism and
The Lord's
Supper

Jerry Nelson

Why do we celebrate the Lord's Supper? Should I be baptized? Why? This study answers those questions and more as it enlightens readers to the gifts of the tangible elements of faith:

The Lord's Supper and Baptism.

"What a gracious command of our Lord that He would tell us to be baptized to make tangible and physical for us so much of what it means to be a Christian."

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Table of Contents

1.	The First Supper	pg. 5
2.	The Lord's Supper	pg. 19
3.	Children and the Lord's Supper	pg. 35
4.	Baptism	pg. 41
5.	When your child wants to be baptized	pg. 59
6.	Additional Notes on the Lord's Supper	pg. 63
7.	Further Notes and Resources on Baptism	pg. 67

Chapter One

The First Supper Mark 14:12-25

We are called “evangelicals.” The word is from the Greek word “euangelion” meaning “good news” or “gospel.” We are people of good news. Recently I was reminded of this simple outline of human history:

Creation
Fall
Redemption
Glory

It begins with God’s creation of us and all else that exists apart from Himself, who has always existed. The first humans, Adam and Eve, lived in a paradise of plenty and in fellowship with God Himself.

The biblical record however clearly points out that this relationship was short-lived because in the self-centeredness of pride Adam and Eve chose to rebel against God. The result was a fall from the privileged position in which they had been living into one of condemnation, loss of relationship with God and distorted relationships with each other. In Romans 5 God makes it equally clear that because of the solidarity of the human race, we all sinned in Adam and “fell” as did Adam and suffer the same consequences.

The Bible says in Romans 3:10-12 *“There is no one righteous, not even one; there is no one who understands, no one who seeks God. All have turned away, they have together become worthless; there is no one who does good, not even one.”* It also says in 2 Thessalonians 1:8-9, *“God will punish those who do not know God and do not obey the gospel of our Lord Jesus. They will be punished*

with everlasting destruction and shut out from the presence of the Lord." Or as Paul reminded the Romans (3:23; 6:23) "All have sinned and... the wages of sin is death."

That is bad news but it gets worse. Eternal separation from God is our future and there is nothing we can do about it. Galatians 3:11 says, "*Clearly no one is justified before God by the law*" by being good enough. Or as we are told in Ephesians 2:1, "*As for you, you were dead in your transgressions and sins.*" What started out as so beautiful quickly became very ugly.

I realize that in an affluent culture, in relatively stable homes, and in healthy bodies, it is very easy, especially for the young, to assume that all is well. We certainly applaud the optimism with which youth faces the future. But at the same time we know that optimism is unfounded outside of a relationship with God. Because without God, sooner or later, everything dies! Can man live without God? Yes, but not very well and not very long! I have often thought and said that if God doesn't exist (as the atheist believes) or even if He's unknowable (as the agnostic believes), then life is pointless at best or a cruel joke at worst.

Samuel Beckett wrote a 35 second stage-play entitled "Breath" that depicted his understanding of life. There were no actors on stage, only rubbish. The play consisted of a recording of a brief cry, followed by an amplified recording of somebody slowly inhaling and exhaling accompanied by an increase and decrease in the light on stage. There is then a second cry, and the plays ends. That's the philosophy of nihilism; the belief that existence is senseless and useless. That seems to me to be the only logical alternative to belief in a personal God who somehow reaches into our world to rescue us from ourselves.

But a personal God does exist and reach into our world He does! That's the third scene in human history—redemption. This is God's gracious intervention in our lives. This is God moving in to stop us from reaping the consequences of our choices and to give us life again. Or as Jesus put it in John 17:3, "*Now this is eternal life: that they may **know** you, the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom you have sent.*" It is this redeeming act of God that forms the basis for the glory, the eternal life with God that is ours in Christ in the future. That's the fourth scene in human history—Glory. This is forever with God and His people on the new earth that God creates after Jesus comes again.

Without God, sooner or later, everything dies! Can man live without God? Yes, but not very well and not very long!

But it is mostly the third scene; the redemption of humanity, the saving of us, that the Bible is all about. Most of what we call the Old Testament is pointing forward to a time in history when, in a decisive and momentous act, God would restore us humans to the place of relationship with Him that He created us to enjoy. And most of the New Testament is a description of that momentous act and how it applies to us. The New Testament books of Matthew, Mark, Luke and John are called the Gospels. They are four accounts of the life of Jesus, which spell out the gospel, the good news, the evangel.

It is noteworthy that the final week of Jesus' life takes up a disproportionate amount of those accounts. Everything in the Old Testament and everything in the Gospel accounts of Jesus' life are leading up to this week and most specifically to three days—the sacrificial death and

resurrection of Jesus. When we come to chapter 14 of the Gospel of Mark we have entered those last three days. Because He is God, Jesus knew well the full significance of what was about to happen. And in that knowledge He instituted a rite, a formal act, which the Bible calls The Lord's Supper. And in that rite, He pulls together all the history of humanity that preceded this time and connects it to what He is about to do. In Him and what He will do is the culmination of human history. Everything before leads up to Him and everything since flows out of Him.

The Lord's Supper then becomes the Gospel; it is the good news expressed in physical, tangible form. 1 Corinthians 11:26 (NASB) says, "*For as often as you **eat this bread and drink the cup, you proclaim the Lord's death** until He comes.*" It is no wonder then Jesus said to His disciples in Luke 22:15, "*I have eagerly desired to eat this Passover with you before I suffer.*" Jesus was excited about this Passover meal because it was very special—the time had now come for the fulfillment of all that 1500 years of Passover celebrations represented. The Lord's Supper fulfills what the Passover meals had long represented. Because the death of the Lamb of God fulfilled what the sacrificial lambs at the Passover represented.

Look at Mark 14:12-26:

"On the first day of the Feast of Unleavened Bread, when it was customary to sacrifice the Passover lamb, Jesus' disciples asked him, 'Where do you want us to go and make preparations for you to eat the Passover?' So he sent two of his disciples, telling them, 'Go into the city, and a man carrying a jar of water will meet you. Follow him. Say to the owner of the house he enters, "The Teacher asks: Where is my guest room, where I may eat the Passover with my disciples?" He will show you a large upper room, furnished and ready. Make preparations for us there.' The

disciples left, went into the city and found things just as Jesus had told them. So they prepared the Passover.

"When evening came, Jesus arrived with the Twelve. While they were reclining at the table eating, he said, 'I tell you the truth, one of you will betray me--one who is eating with me.' They were saddened, and one by one they said to him, 'Surely not I?' 'It is one of the Twelve,' he replied, 'one who dips bread into the bowl with me. The Son of Man will go just as it is written about him. But woe to that man who betrays the Son of Man! It would be better for him if he had not been born.'

***In the Lord's Supper He pulls together
all the history of humanity that preceded
this time and connects it to what
He is about to do.***

"While they were eating, Jesus took bread, gave thanks and broke it, and gave it to his disciples, saying, 'Take it; this is my body.' Then he took the cup, gave thanks and offered it to them, and they all drank from it. 'This is my blood of the covenant, which is poured out for many,' he said to them. 'I tell you the truth, I will not drink again of the fruit of the vine until that day when I drink it anew in the kingdom of God.' When they had sung a hymn, they went out to the Mount of Olives."

Many of you know that the Feast of Unleavened Bread was the longer holiday period in Jewish society that included the shorter Passover celebration. But Passover was the main event. And you know that the Passover celebration referred back to that first Passover when the angel of death passed over the Israelite homes, sparing the firstborn in those homes, as it killed the firstborn in the Egyptian homes,

setting the stage for Israel to escape from 400 years of Egyptian slavery. God redeemed His people from slavery and led them to the land He had promised them hundreds of years earlier. Passover marked their salvation. Passover marked their new beginning as the people of God. Who they were and what their future would be flowed out of that event.

And at the heart of the event was the sacrifice of a lamb. Each Israelite family was to take a perfect lamb and to slay it, sacrificing it in the place of their own firstborn sons, and they were to put the blood of that sacrificial lamb on the doors of their homes. When the angel of death entered Egypt it would pass over those homes. The blood of the lamb would save them. As I said, for 1500 years Jewish people had been observing this ritual of Passover. Three gospel writers, Matthew, Mark and Luke, make a direct connection between that Passover and the Lord's Supper.

Jesus is excited to radically alter His disciple's understanding of Passover by pointing them to the fulfillment of Passover. And that fulfillment was what He would do in the next 36 hours covering parts of three days. But before Mark gets to the fulfillment of the Passover celebration in the Lord's Supper, he wants us to note something else that is very important. He takes the time to show us that Jesus is in complete control of the people and events surrounding Him.

Knowing that Jesus died, it would be easy to think of Jesus as a victim of the powerful Jewish and Roman officials of his day. Many people, even today, consider Jesus to have been in the wrong place and the wrong time. And thinking that way, they see in His death little more than a sad story of martyrdom. But Mark demonstrates that Jesus controlled every thing about what was happening. He had apparently

contacted both a guesthouse owner and another man and set up the codes that would be used to get His advance team to the right house to prepare for the Passover celebration. And sure enough, when the two disciples go into the city they see a man carrying a water jug. Only women carried such jugs in that day, so he was obvious. Not only that, when they used the code words with the homeowner, he immediately let them in to prepare.

Jesus is excited to radically alter His disciple's understanding of Passover by pointing them to the fulfillment of Passover. Jesus is in complete control of the people and events surrounding Him.

Then when they are eating, Jesus demonstrates that He knows exactly what will happen. He predicts that one of the disciples will betray Him. The disciples have no idea of who it is and each is more worried whether it is he, than that Jesus will be betrayed. But again Jesus demonstrates complete planning and control even in this when He says, "*The Son of Man will go just as it is written about him.*" (Mark 14:21) Might Jesus have had in mind Psalm 41:9, which says, "*Even my close friend, whom I trusted, he who shared my bread, has lifted up his heel against me.*"

What is very evident is that Jesus was moving deliberately toward the event that brought Him to earth.

- He held the authorities at bay in order to be in just the right place at the right time.
- He refused to let the crowds or His disciples rush Him into the wrong objective or the wrong timing.
- He planned to be in Jerusalem at Passover and He planned to be the new Passover Lamb when He died

on the cross.

And in that plan and timing He instituted the Lord's Supper. *"While they were eating, Jesus took bread, gave thanks and broke it, and gave it to his disciples, saying, 'Take it; this is my body.'* Then he took the cup, gave thanks and offered it to them, and they all drank from it. *'This is my blood of the covenant, which is poured out for many,' he said to them. 'I tell you the truth, I will not drink again of the fruit of the vine until that day when I drink it anew in the kingdom of God.'"* (Mark 14:22-25)

***It is that the coming of Jesus into our lives
is dramatically and repeatedly
demonstrated. Jesus in us is life.***

In Jesus' day the Passover celebration was observed in each home in the following way: After sundown the family would gather.

1. The father would pronounce a blessing.
2. The first cup of wine would be served.
3. The food would be brought in but not yet eaten.
4. The son would ask why this night is special.
5. The father would recall the biblical account of the Passover redemption in Egypt.
6. Together the family would sing what is called the first part of the Hallel which is part of Psalm 113-115
7. Then the second cup of wine would be served.
8. Following that, the father would pronounce a blessing on the bread, which he then broke and distributed to everyone.
9. Then the meal of the sacrificed lamb was eaten.
10. After the meal the father would bless the third cup of wine with a prayer of thanksgiving.
11. Then the family would sing the second part of the Hallel from Psalm 116-118

12. Finally a fourth cup of wine would be served.¹

Best I can determine, it is points 8-11 that Mark and the other gospel writers tell about. It is time in the meal of the breaking of bread and then after the meal the time of the third cup that Jesus uses to establish the Lord's Supper. And while the early Christian church continued to have a meal at the time of the Lord's Supper, the ritual itself had been simplified to the breaking of bread and the passing of the cup as Jesus did.

Now with all of that said, what does it mean to you? From our historical perspective it is no wonder Jesus was eager to do this. He knew how powerful and beneficial this ritual can be in our lives. Mark 14:22 says, "*Jesus took bread, gave thanks and broke it, and gave it to his disciples, saying, 'Take it; this is my body.'*" Jesus had often declared Himself to be the bread of life. Just as bread is necessary for physical life, so He, Jesus, is necessary for spiritual life.² As it is stated in 1 John 5:12, "*He who has the Son has life; he who does not have the Son of God does not have life.*" When we eat this bread we take it into our bodies, symbolic of receiving Jesus into our lives. It is not that we repeatedly become God's children or that we are saved over and over again when we participate in the Lord's Supper. It is that the coming of Jesus into our lives is dramatically and repeatedly demonstrated. And that very demonstration confirms over and over again to us that Jesus has become spiritual bread to us—Jesus in us is life. When I eat that bread it symbolizes the very receiving of Jesus that has saved my life.

Then after the meal, Mark 14:23-24 says, "*(Jesus) took the cup, gave thanks and offered it to them, and they all drank from it. 'This is my blood of the covenant, which is poured out for many,' he said to them.*" Just as He said the bread was His body, so here He says the cup, meaning the wine

in it, is His blood. I'll come back to that in a minute, but notice He adds, "*This is my blood **of the covenant** which is poured out for many.*" Here Jesus directly connects His death to the new covenant relationship with God that God is making with His people.

The Old Covenant, the old formal relationship, was made right after the Israelite exodus from Egypt, and was also made with blood—the blood of animals. Just as the Old Covenant was ratified by the bloody sacrifice of animals, so God the Son is the sacrifice that ratifies the new covenant. Everyone knew that the blood of bulls and goats couldn't take away sin. But Christ Jesus came as the perfect sacrifice for sins and offered Himself for us so that we could have a new relationship with God. Or to go back to the Passover celebration, Jesus became the final and perfect Passover Lamb to provide for the redemption of His people. His blood, meaning His death, was necessary to satisfy Divine justice against our sin and sinfulness—for the wages of sin is death. But, "*God made Christ who had no sin to be sin for us, so that in Jesus we might become the righteousness of God.*" (2 Corinthians 5:21) The death of Jesus makes possible a wholly different relationship with a holy God—we can belong to Him forever.

Now back to the bread and the wine. They symbolize the body and blood of Jesus. But please understand that a symbol is exact and a symbol has power. The Vietnam War Memorial in Washington D.C. reminds us of the war and the stark facts about it. But the shape of it, as if gouging out the earth as the war did not only physically in Vietnam but also psychologically in our national conscience, along with the thousands of names engraved in black, bleak, sameness, causes us to experience it in some measure. That Memorial is a powerful symbol. Likewise the Lord's Supper with its bread and cup, when accompanied by a

reminder of the events they represent, not only reminds us but also puts us in that place—we re-live the experience.³

The old spiritual sang, "Were you there when they crucified my Lord?" The Bible answers that: "*Do you not know that all of us who have been baptized into Christ Jesus have been baptized into His death? Therefore we have been buried with Him through baptism into death, in order that as Christ was raised from the dead through the glory of the Father, so we too might walk in newness of life.*"

(Romans 6:3-4)

So Jesus' story is our story as we re-live it again and again in the Lord's Supper. When we eat the bread and drink the cup, we are acting out the gospel message again. Augustine referred to the Lord's Supper as "The visible word of God."

Jesus directly connects His death to the new covenant relationship with God that God is making with His people.

Leonard Vander Zee has written, "As humbling as it may be, we need more than talk, more than words on a page; we need a touch, a smell, a taste—just as lovers need more than the words 'I love you' but also a kiss or an embrace. But the sacrament is more than a medium of communication; it is a medium of action, God's action."⁴

God does something in us as we in faith participate in the Lord's Supper. Another man wrote of the effects of kissing his young daughter. "I kiss my daughter in order to love her as well as because I love her." Vander Zee adds, "Love requires physical expression. But does a kiss create love. Not exactly, but it is expected that the kisses will cause his love for his daughter to grow. The physical display of

affection is the means and instrument by which love grows and increases. The kiss is a 'sacrament,' an outward and visible sign by which love is given the expression it craves and is given growth and strengthening in itself."⁵

When we come to Jesus' words, in the Lord's Supper, about the bread being His body and the drink being His blood, we know that He is not saying that He is physically present in the bread and drink or that He physically enters us in the bread and drink. He is saying that He is spiritually present and He comes to us. The ingesting of the bread and drink corresponds to the spiritual indwelling of Christ in us.

He is part of our very spiritual being, as food becomes part of our physical being. This is a mystery to be sure but no less declared by God's word. When we eat the bread and drink the wine, Jesus says it is, in one way, like eating His flesh and drinking His blood. In other words, by faith we are taking Him in, trusting Him, reaffirming our faith, declaring anew our belief and trust in Him. And in that He ministers His grace to us to believe. There is a mysterious synergy in this that we cannot fully explain.

- He offers us Himself in the bread and cup.
- We obey and eat and drink, believing Him.
- He ministers His grace to us to trust Him more fully.

By faith and the work of the Holy Spirit, we become recipients of the grace behind the symbol as surely as we are recipients of the physical bread and cup. So we are not just remembering an historical fact. We are entering into that history again. As I said before, His story is our story. I invite you to receive Him today.

Each time you participate in the Lord's Supper, remember this: this is your story—birth, fall, redemption and glory—in Christ. To be sure there will be many distractions,

disappointments, discouragements and even distress between now and the time we see Jesus again, but the Bible says in 1 Corinthians 2:9 "*No eye has seen, no ear has heard, no mind has conceived what God has prepared for those who love him.*" Until we see Him face to face, there could be no sweeter, more intimate fellowship with Jesus than what He offers us in the bread and cup. He comes to us and He comes into us to commune with us, reassure us, and strengthen us. Receive Him!

End Notes

¹ See notes in William Lane, *Mark*, p. 501-2

² See also John 6:35 – "Then Jesus declared, 'I am the bread of life. He who comes to me will never go hungry'..."

³ Vander Zee, *Christ, Baptism and the Lord's Supper*, p. 32

⁴ *Ibid*, p. 192

⁵ *Ibid*, p. 67

Chapter Two

The Lord's Supper 1 Corinthians 11:17-34

The only name given to it in the Scriptures is "The Lord's Supper" (see 1 Corinthians 11:20) or maybe also "The Lord's Table." (See 1 Corinthians 10:21) We appropriately refer to it in other ways such as:

- **Communion:** taken from the Latin translation of the Greek word for fellowship (1 Corinthians 10:16 NIV "Participation"= Greek koinonia).
- **The Eucharist:** from the Latin and Greek for grateful or gratitude.
- **The Mass:** the origin of the word is uncertain but it might be from the Latin for "sent." ("Ite, missa est"— "Go, you have been sent.")
- **The Sacrament:** from the Latin word translating the Greek word "mystery."
- **An Ordinance:** which is from the Latin for something ordered by divine decree as when the Lord ordained or ordered it at the Last Supper with His disciples.

While all of these words can correctly apply to the Lord's Supper, unfortunately the words "eucharist," "mass," and "sacrament" have been, in some groups, freighted with meaning beyond or even contradictory to the Scriptures. It is probably best to refer to this ritual by the name given to it in the Bible—"the Lord's Supper." But I would add that calling it "communion" or the eucharist is not inappropriate if those words are rightly understood.

In almost all Christian churches, the Lord's Supper is observed regularly if not frequently. Why? What does it mean? What does it accomplish? Is it important? Even

those who have often participated in the Lord's Supper sometimes wonder what it is they are supposed to be doing during it.

- Should I be praying, confessing sin, or singing?
- Must I be silent or can I talk to those around me?
- What is supposed to be happening during the Lord's Supper?

While Matthew, Mark and Luke all record our Lord's institution of this ritual, to my knowledge, the only direct instruction to the church on the Lord's Supper is given by the Apostle Paul in 1 Corinthians 11. Please observe, as we look at this text, that Paul was writing to correct a church for their inappropriate behavior before and during the Lord's Supper. It is his correction and instruction that help us understand what the Lord's Supper is all about and what we are to do as we participate.

For whenever you eat this bread and drink this cup, you proclaim the Lord's death until he comes.

Look at 1 Corinthians 11:17-34: *"In the following directives I have no praise for you, for your meetings do more harm than good. In the first place, I hear that when you come together as a church, there are divisions among you, and to some extent I believe it. No doubt there have to be differences among you to show which of you have God's approval. When you come together, it is not the Lord's Supper you eat, for as you eat, each of you goes ahead without waiting for anybody else. One remains hungry, another gets drunk. Don't you have homes to eat and drink in? Or do you despise the church of God and humiliate those who have nothing? What shall I say to you? Shall I praise you for this? Certainly not!*

"For I received from the Lord what I also passed on to you: The Lord Jesus, on the night he was betrayed took bread, and when he had given thanks, he 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 took the cup, saying, 'This cup is the new covenant in my blood; do this, whenever you drink it, in remembrance of me.' For whenever you eat this bread and drink this 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 manner will be guilty of sinning against the body and blood of the Lord. A man ought to examine himself before he eats of the bread and drinks of the cup. For anyone who eats and drinks without recognizing the body of the Lord eats and drinks judgment on himself. That is why many among you are weak and sick, and a number of you have fallen asleep. But if we judged ourselves, we would not come under judgment. When we are judged by the Lord, we are being disciplined so that we will not be condemned with the world.

"So then, my brothers, when you come together to eat, wait for each other. If anyone is hungry, he should eat at home, so that when you meet together it may not result in judgment. And when I come I will give further directions."

A quick review of the earlier chapters of 1 Corinthians would remind you that one of Paul's primary concerns with the church in Corinth was their factionalism—their tendency to divide into camps, cliques—fighting with each other or just ignoring each other. As we have seen, he still has this problem in mind when he writes this part of the letter.

It was common for the Christian church in its early years to regularly eat a meal together. Jude called them "love feasts." (Jude 1:12) At the end of their meal they would

participate in the Lord's Supper. In verses 17-22 Paul points out that, by their actions, they are contradicting everything the meal and the Lord's Supper were supposed to represent: "...*your meetings do more harm than good... there are divisions among you...When you come together, it is not the Lord's Supper you eat, for as you eat, each of you goes ahead without waiting for anybody else. One remains hungry, another gets drunk...Shall I praise you for this? Certainly not!*"(1 Cor. 11:17-22)

Those who had much were disregarding those who had little. With open disregard for the poor among them the wealthier were (pun intended) eating it up. This contradicted the very oneness that was supposed to characterize the church. I also want you to see that when Paul completes this section of the letter, he ends it on this same theme: "*So then, my brothers, when you come together to eat, wait for each other.*"(1 Corinthians 11:33-34) Tucked right into that context Paul calls attention particularly to the Lord's Supper, giving both instruction and warning.

The Lord's Supper is commanded of all Christians.

First look at the instruction. Look at verses 23-26: "*For I received from the Lord what I also passed on to you: The Lord Jesus, on the night he was betrayed, took bread, and when he had given thanks, he 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 took the cup, saying, '*This cup is the new covenant in my blood; do this, whenever you drink it, in remembrance of me.'* For whenever you eat this bread and drink this cup, you proclaim the Lord's death until he comes."(1 Corinthians 11) From this I wish to lay out for you several principles regarding the Lord's Supper.

I. The Lord's Supper is commanded of all Christians.

1 Corinthians 11:23, 26 says, *"For I received from the Lord what I also passed on to you...For whenever you eat this bread and drink this cup, you proclaim the Lord's death until he comes."* (Cf. Matthew 26 and Mark 14) For those who would contend or at least act like Communion is optional for the believer, I would remind you that here Paul makes it quite clear that what Jesus instituted, at the Last Supper with his disciples, was meant for His church to observe until He comes again. The Lord's Supper is properly called an "ordinance" because Jesus ordained it for His church; He ordered it to be practiced. Let those who treat communion with a "take-it-or-leave-it" attitude understand that that is in direct disobedience of our Lord.

II. The Lord's Supper is for all believers but believers only.

1 Corinthians 11:23 says, *"The Lord Jesus, on the night he was betrayed, took bread..."* With those words, Paul clearly joins his instruction on the Lord's Supper here with the ritual Jesus established with His disciples at the Last Supper. Judas aside, Communion was for His followers and not others.

Not only Jesus' example but also Jesus' words at the Last Supper make it equally clear that this ritual is for believers only, for Jesus speaks of the "new covenant" which is ours only by grace through faith. Those who are not believers are not part of that covenant and the Supper makes no sense for them. Participating while not believing is a contradiction.

On the other hand, all true Christians are welcome at this table whether they are members of one particular church or

not. To restrict believers from participating would violate the very essence of the ritual—the unity of the people of God in the common bond of Christ.

III. The Lord's Supper is a ritual for the church as a whole and thus it is not a private act.

- Jesus instituted it with His disciples.
- In both Acts 2 and 1 Corinthians we see that it was observed when the church came together, not individually in private.
- And the very symbolism of the common cup and single loaf speaks to a major issue in communion—our oneness with each other in Christ—reenacted every time we take communion together.

Let me speak to that point of a common cup and a single loaf. When Jesus instituted the Lord's Supper He took **bread** and He broke it and the disciples all took from the same loaf. Contrary to the King James Version (See 1 Corinthians 11:24) the breaking was not primarily a reference to His body being broken but to the sharing from the same loaf. (Cf. John 19:36)

Jesus also took the **cup** and they all drank of it. In a brief reference to the Lord's Supper in 1 Corinthians 10:17 Paul makes explicit what is already implicit in Jesus' actions. Paul writes, *"Because there is one loaf, we, who are many, are one body, for we all partake of the one loaf."* Certainly in 1 Corinthians 11, Paul's major point has to do with their oneness instead of the way they were disregarding each other.

From the institution of the Lord's Supper by Jesus and in the church, through the centuries, Communion stresses two points at the same time—our unity in Christ. The Lord's Supper reflects our oneness and our oneness in Christ and

His cross work to make us one in Him. For that reason we discourage private communion and even communion observed only by a part of the church, such as a small group. Such private or small group communion seems to us to be a contradiction of the very intention of communion. Not having a single loaf large enough to feed a thousand people and also concerned with hygiene, we break the bread before Communion and we pour the drink into separate cups. So in order to make the symbolism more explicit, I wish to initiate the ritual by actually breaking a single loaf and by pouring the drink into a single cup. The Lord's Supper is not a private act but a ritual for the whole church.

IV. Just as Jesus was the host at the first Lord's Supper, so He is the host at each Lord's Supper—He is present in the bread and cup.

1 Corinthians 11:23-24 says, "*The Lord Jesus...took bread, and when he had given thanks, he broke it and said, 'This is my body...'*" In all the Gospel accounts Jesus said it this strongly: Referring to the bread and then the cup He said, "*This **is** my body*" and "*This **is** my blood.*" Couldn't Jesus have said, "This represents my body" if that was all He meant?

As I will attempt to explain better in a minute, Jesus is somehow present in the bread and drink. No, He cannot mean that He is physically present in them for He is now physically in heaven. It must mean that He is spiritually present! But as we know in much else about our God and our relationship with Him, just because it is spiritual rather than physical doesn't mean it is any less real. As we participate in the Lord's Supper, we benefit by remembering that Jesus is actually here. He has chosen to take up residence in the bread and cup and be the host of

this Lord's Supper even as He was at the first.

If you think I go too far in saying that Jesus is present in the bread and cup, remember John the Baptist's experience at the baptism of Jesus. We read in the Gospel of John 1:32-33, "*I saw the Spirit come down from heaven as a dove and remain on him (Jesus). I would not have known him, except that the one who sent me to baptize with water told me, 'The man on whom you see the Spirit come down and remain is he who will baptize with the Holy Spirit.'*" God the Holy Spirit was present in the dove. It ought not to be strange to us that God should present Himself to us in the physical.

- He did so in the pillar of fire that led the Israelites.
- He did so in the Shekinah glory in the Tabernacle.
- He did so in the humanity of the Lord Jesus.

John Calvin writes "God chose to represent the Holy Spirit to John in this way. Likewise God has chosen to present his Son to us in the way of the bread and cup."¹ We know Jesus said that in the Lord's Supper; He is present. He has chosen to be here.

I think Charles Spurgeon captured this well in the words of a hymn:

"What food luxurious loads the board,
When at his table sits the Lord!
The wine how rich, the bread how sweet,
When Jesus deigns the guests to meet!

If now with eyes defiled and dim,
We see the signs, but see not him;
O may his love the scales displace
And bid us see him face to face!

O glorious Bridegroom of our hearts,
Your present smile a heav'n imparts!
O lift the veil, if veil there be,

Let every saint your glory see. (C.H. Spurgeon)

Jesus is the host at each Lord's Supper—He is present in the bread and cup.

V. The Lord's Supper symbolizes the past, completed, self-sacrifice of Jesus for us and is not a perpetual or repeated sacrifice.

1 Corinthians 11:24,25 says, *"This is my body, which is for you; do this in remembrance of me...This cup is the new covenant in my blood; do this, whenever you drink it, in remembrance of me."*

800 years before Jesus, Jeremiah wrote, *"The time is coming," declares the LORD, "when I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel and with the house of Judah. It will not be like the covenant I made with their forefathers..."This is the covenant I will make with the house of Israel after that time," declares the LORD. "I will put my law in their minds and write it on their hearts. I will be their God, and they will be my people..."For I will forgive their wickedness and will remember their sins no more."* A "covenant" or "testament" is a binding agreement between God and mankind. Jesus said He came to inaugurate the "new" covenant that Jeremiah prophesied.

***"God has chosen to present his Son to us
in the way of the bread and cup."***

Hebrews 12:24 declares that *"Jesus (is) the mediator of a new covenant..."* And in the Gospels, repeated here in 1 Corinthians, Jesus said that His body and blood (His willing death for us) are the means to bring about that new relationship with God. Or as Paul said it in Ephesians 2:13, *"But now in Christ Jesus you who once were far away (from God) have been brought near through the blood of Christ."* Christ's death, His dead body and shed blood,

demonstrated that He took the wrath of God that we deserved because of our sin and made it possible for us to have peace with God.

But please note, nowhere in the New Testament is the Lord's Supper called a sacrifice. Instead, the Lord's Supper points back to the ultimate and completed sacrifice already made by Jesus by means of His body and blood. Hebrews 9:24-26 says, *"For Christ did not...enter heaven to offer himself again and again, the way the (Jewish) high priest enters the Most Holy Place every year with blood that is not his own...But now (Christ) has appeared once for all...to do away with sin by the sacrifice of himself."* And, Hebrews 10:10-12 says, *"We have been made holy through the sacrifice of the body of Jesus Christ once for all...When (Christ) had offered for all time one sacrifice for sins, he sat down at the right hand of God."*

So, Jesus said, when you participate in the Lord's Supper, "Do this...in remembrance of me." Certainly this includes the mental exercise of recalling the facts of Christ's death on our behalf. But it is more than that; it is also a choice. A choice to again embrace Jesus and what He has done for us. It is to affirm that **who** He is and **what** He did has a **bearing on my life today** and forever.² When we eat the bread and drink the cup, we are acting out the gospel message again. Augustine refers to the Lord's Supper as "the visible Word of God." By Jesus death for us we can be pardoned for our sins and become the children of Almighty God and brothers and sisters of one another. Romans 5:1-2 says, *"We have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ, through whom we have gained access by faith into this grace in which we now stand."*

I think John Calvin summarizes this well when he writes: "Here, then, is the...consolation which we derive from the

Supper. It directs and leads us to the cross of Jesus Christ and to his resurrection, to certify to us that whatever (sin) there may be in us, the Lord nevertheless recognizes and accepts us as righteous—whatever (residuals) of death may be in us, he nevertheless gives us life—whatever misery may be in us, he nevertheless fills us with all felicity (joy). Or to explain the matter more simply—as in ourselves we are devoid of all good, and have not one particle of what might help to procure (gain) salvation, the Supper is an attestation (affirmation) that, having been made partakers of the death...of Jesus Christ, we have every thing that is useful and salutary (healthful) to us...Let us recollect, then, that the Supper is given to us as a mirror in which we may

***God's declaration is that He is always
doing good for His own.***

contemplate Jesus Christ crucified in order to deliver us from condemnation, and raised again in order to procure (obtain) for us righteousness and eternal life. It is indeed true that this same grace is offered us by the (written) gospel, yet in the Supper we have more (tangible) certainty, and fuller enjoyment of it."³ The Lord's Supper symbolizes the past, completed, self-sacrifice of Jesus for us.

Before coming to the last and most important point about the Lord's Supper I want to deal briefly with what I think is a misunderstanding about Paul's warning in this passage. Communion calls for self-examination of attitude and conduct. Particularly it calls us to consider how we are treating each other. Look at 1 Corinthians 11:27-29: *"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 man ought to examine himself before he eats of the bread and drinks of*

the cup. For anyone who eats and drinks without recognizing the body of the Lord eats and drinks judgment on himself."

Here is a section of the teaching that I think has caused no end of unnecessary mental suffering among God-fearing people. The typical understanding of this passage is that the believer is to inspect his life to see if there is any unconfessed sin. Then feeling sufficiently sorry for it and confessing it, the believer is somehow made worthy again to take communion. And further, if we take communion without confessing our sins we eat and drink judgment on ourselves. If you think about it, it sounds very much like what we criticize in some Catholics who go to confession before they take communion. In this popular understanding of this passage have we created a form of "evangelical" confession and penance before Communion?

God wants us to know that His love for us is so great that He can't contain Himself.

Closer inspection of three words might relieve us of that misunderstanding. First is the word, "unworthy." Paul is not addressing your character, as if because of sin you are unworthy to take communion. The Gospel message is that no one is worthy and we are made worthy not by confession but by Jesus' righteousness being given to us. Paul is not describing your character; instead he is describing certain actions that he has already been pointing out.

The second word is "examine." Again, I remind you this is not some sort of morbid introspection attempting to ferret out any vestige of formerly unknown unconfessed sin. Paul is saying I want you to test yourself to see how genuine your motives and actions are particularly toward each other.

That becomes clearer when we look at the third word, "body" in verse 29. Earlier I pointed out that the problem Paul was addressing in Corinth was their lack of love for each other. That disregard for each other spilled over even into their participation in the Lord's Supper. Paul describes their guilt as not "recognizing the body of the Lord." It is not that they looked at the bread and said, "I don't know what that is." It is that they were claiming to belong to Christ and His church while at the same time sinning against their brothers and sisters in the Lord.⁴

Dr. Blomberg writes of this, "The (Lord's Supper) should be a time of self-examination, not so much for past sins, though (true) repentance from them is always appropriate. Rather, Christians should consider their present attitudes toward those more needy than themselves. This would lead to a radically different group of people who ought to refrain from the Lord's Supper than usually appears. All repentant sinners are welcome, no matter how far away from God they may have recently felt. (But) all professing believers who are unprepared to give generously of their wealth to help the poor in their midst, or who treat people of lower classes as second-class citizens, or who simply remain unreconciled with fellow (believers), should refrain. Jesus' words concerning a somewhat analogous situation remain remarkably relevant here too: *"If you are offering your gift at the altar and there remember that your brother has something against you, leave your gift there in front of the altar. First go and be reconciled to your brother; then come and offer your gift.* (Matthew 5:23-24)."⁵ In 1 Corinthians 11 the Lord's Supper explicitly calls for us to examine our attitudes and conduct toward other Christians, especially the poor.

VI. Now most importantly, the Lord's Supper is a means of grace. There is mystery in this but not magic.

I must start with what that does not mean. Sacramentalism is a view that, when blessed, the bread and the cup bring God's saving grace to the recipient even if the recipient doesn't believe. In other words the bread and cup become inherently and automatically effective. This we reject as totally unbiblical and damning to souls.

So if we reject such a magical view, what do we accept? When we say something is a "means of grace" we declare that by that "something" God grants His grace to us whereby we are spiritually benefited. When, for example, seeking to hear from God, we humbly read God's Word, the Holy Spirit supernaturally minister's God's grace to us nurturing our faith. The reading of the Word of God with faith becomes a means of grace.

Likewise, as we participate in the Lord's Supper, humbly seeking the Lord Jesus in faith, He comes to us in the bread and cup. No, as I said earlier, He is not physically present, but He is really and truly spiritually present. Pastor and theologian, Robert Letham, wrote, "Thus in the (Lord's Supper) the Holy Spirit unites the faithful (people) to the person of Christ as they eat and drink the signs, the physical elements of bread and wine. There is an inseparable (joining) of sign and reality. As truly as we eat the bread and drink the wine, so we feed on Christ by faith...The role of those who take the bread and cup is, therefore, to believe and receive."⁶

When we eat the bread and drink the wine, Jesus says it is like eating His flesh and drinking His blood. In other words, by faith we are taking Him in, trusting Him, reaffirming our

faith, declaring anew our belief and trust in Him. And in that He ministers His grace to us to believe. There is a mysterious synergy in this that we cannot fully explain. He offers us Himself in the bread and cup.

- We obey and eat and drink, believing Him.
- He ministers His grace to us to trust Him more fully.

In a well-known passage in John 6, after miraculously feeding bread to thousands of people, Jesus refers to Himself as the bread of life. Then Jesus says plainly, "*For my Father's will is that everyone who **looks to the Son and believes** in him shall have eternal life, and I will raise him up at the last day.*" (John 6:40 – Emphasis Added) The point is that He, in His very person, is the life they need. But to press the point that it is Jesus, Himself, that they need, He uses metaphors for what He has already said, when He says again, "*Whoever eats my flesh and drinks my blood has eternal life, and I will raise him up at the last day.*" (John 6:54) Certainly you see the parallel between verses 54 and 40. When we trust in Jesus He does not physically come into us but He does truly come into us spiritually.

Likewise, when we come to Jesus' words, in the Lord's Supper, about the bread being His body and the drink being His blood, we see that He is not saying He is physically present in the bread and drink or that He physically enters us in the bread and drink. He is saying He is spiritually present and He comes to us. The ingesting of the bread and drink corresponds to the spiritual indwelling of Christ in us. He is part of our very spiritual beings, as food becomes part of our physical beings. This is a mystery to be sure but no less declared by God's Word.

Until the day we see Him face to face, there could be no sweeter, more intimate, fellowship with Jesus than what He

offers us in the bread and cup. He comes to us—He comes into us to commune with us, reassure us, and strengthen us.

Remember:

- The Lord's Supper is a public ritual for all believers gathered together.
- Our Lord Himself hosts the Lord's Supper; He is present.
- The Lord's Supper is a sign to us of the completed cross work of Jesus on our behalf and of our new relationship with Him and each other.
- The Lord's Supper is a means of grace to those who come humbly seeking Him; Jesus comes to you in the bread and the cup.

End Notes

¹ John Calvin, "Short Treatise on the Supper of Our Lord."

² Cf. William Willimon, *Sunday Dinner*

³ Calvin, *Ibid*, Points 9, 10

⁴ Thistleton, p. 890

⁵ Blomberg, *1 Corinthians*, p. 234-5

⁶ Robert Letham, *The Lord's Supper*, p. 28-29

Chapter Three

"Why Can't I Have a 'Snack' Like Everyone Else?" ***Thoughts on Children and the Lord's Supper***

By John Piper

Sooner or later, a child who is regularly sitting through a Sunday morning worship service is bound to ask something like, "Why can't I have a 'snack' like everyone else?" So it is not surprising that the second most-frequent question I am asked in children's ministry is, "When should my child take the Lord's Supper?" Since it is such a prevalent question, I have been encouraged me to write an article on the subject.

A General Response

When people inquire about children taking the Lord's Supper, I have two perspectives to share with them. The first is that our communion services are open to all present, including children, who are: trusting in Jesus Christ alone for the forgiveness of their sins and the fulfillment of all his promises to us (including eternal life); and who intend to follow him as Lord and obey his commandments.

Therefore, children are welcome to participate in the Lord's Supper: when they can understand its significance; when they are able to give a credible profession of faith in Christ; and when they consciously intend to follow the Lord in obedience.

There is no test they take or class they attend to help establish their readiness. We simply leave it up to parents to decide when their young disciples are ready.

A Personal Response

My other response to this question is to share how Sally and I dealt with the issue for our two daughters. Our way is certainly not the only acceptable way to handle the issue. Other spiritually wise parents at Bethlehem, including some of my respected colleagues on the pastoral staff, have handled it differently. Nevertheless, I commend "our way" to you for your consideration as you lay out a path for your children.

When our girls were small, we explained that they would be able to fully participate in the Lord's Supper sometime after they were thirteen. Admittedly, this response was somewhat arbitrary and sounds a bit legalistic-but it was a simple response that they could grasp, and it was enough to settle the issue for them. There were, however, important reasons why we encouraged them to wait. I'd like to share six of them with you:

1. Wait for Understanding

Probably the most compelling reason for us came out of 1 Corinthians 11:27ff where Paul warns us of the perils of eating and drinking in an "unworthy manner." Though both of our girls confessed faith in Christ before their sixth birthday, we wanted them to be old enough to contemplate the significance of the Lord's Supper. We wanted them to understand the meaning of the ordinance and also have enough maturity to do the self-examination that Paul calls for in verse 28.

2. Wait for More Independent Thinking

We decided that they should come to the Lord's Table after they were baptized, and we did not want them to be baptized before age thirteen. The main reason for this is that children are thinking more independently as they enter the teen years and therefore are more likely to embrace the

decisions and commitments they make as their own. Our pre-teen decisions and commitments are often suspect in our minds as we get older. They are suspect in that we barely connect with the reason why we made the commitment.

At age seven I have a very vague memory of raising my hand in Sunday school and indicating a desire to follow Jesus. I remember sitting on the bed with my Mom, praying and writing the date of my conversion into my Bible. I am at a loss to tell you, however, what it was that was so compelling to me. I don't know if I understood what I was doing. I simply have no recollection now-neither did I have it when I was thirteen. Without that recollection it was difficult to have confidence in the decision I made. This is probably why I felt a need to "accept Jesus into my heart" again during my teen years.

It is not uncommon for those who were baptized during their pre-teen years to feel a need to be "re-baptized" when they are older. Therefore, it made sense for us to encourage our children to hold off on baptism until a time when it would be more meaningful to them-when they could more fully embrace the commitment behind this public declaration of faith.

Although we do not believe baptism must necessarily precede participation in the Lord's Supper, it seemed more natural for our children to join the Lord at his table after they followed the Lord in the obedience of baptism. Since we planned for our girls to wait until at least age thirteen to be baptized, it followed that they would also need to wait until then to take the Lord's Supper.

3. Wait for Significance

Even though our girls would have "qualified" for baptism and the Lord's Supper at an earlier age, we believe that waiting helped to impress on them the significance of these ordinances and the unspeakable privilege it is to participate in them.

4. Wait for Anticipation

Each time the tray passed them by, they could look forward to the day when they would join in this celebration. I believe that this period of anticipation made their first and subsequent experiences at the table sweeter and more meaningful to them.

5. Wait for Memories

We wanted our girls to remember their first experience at the Lord's Table. Memories of the first decade of our lives are often fuzzy at best. Therefore, it made sense for them to wait until a time when they would more likely remember the experience.

6. Wait for Maturity

There is nothing particularly significant about age thirteen. We could have easily picked age eleven or twelve or fourteen. Sally and I simply wanted to draw a very clear line for our girls that would mark a definite transition out of childhood into young adulthood. As arbitrary as it may seem, we have seen tremendous value in having a tangible point where we begin to place certain expectations and to offer certain privileges that are associated with maturity. Hopefully I have said enough for you to understand why we chose to save the significance of the Lord's Table for the other side of the line.

Even though we may ask our children to wait for a season before they fully participate in the Lord's Supper, it can still

be a significant experience for them in their pre-teen years. We should not wait to teach them about the meaning of the celebration and how to examine themselves, confess their sins, and remember the Lord's death until he comes.

My aim in writing this article is not to have all our children going through the proper religious motions at the "perfect" time (whenever that is). My aim and earnest prayer is that our children will know the sweet fellowship with the living Christ and experience his life-changing, soul-satisfying work in their hearts. May the Lord use our efforts in preparing our children for his table to nudge them into closer fellowship with him.

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Chapter Four

Baptism – Holy Water? Romans 6:3-4; Acts 2:38

Several years ago Ralph Wood a faculty member of Wake Forest University told of being invited to participate in a baptism at a nearby prison.

He wrote, "A guard escorted the prisoner from behind a fence that was topped with razor wire. His family was not able to attend because their broken-down car had failed yet again. There were just three of us, with the guard looking curiously on. To the strumming of the chaplain's guitar, we sang a croaky version of "Amazing Grace." We did not balk at declaring ourselves "wretches."

"After a pastoral prayer, the barefoot prisoner stepped into a wooden box that had been lined with a plastic sheet and filled with water. It looked like a large coffin, and rightly so. This was no warmed and tiled (baptismal) with its painted River Jordan winding pleasantly in the distance. This was the place of death, the watery chaos from which God graciously made the world and to which, in rightful wrath, he almost returned it.

"Pronouncing the Trinitarian formula, the pastor lowered the new Christian down into the liquid grave to be buried with Christ and then raised him up to life eternal. Though the water was cold, the man stood there weeping for joy.

"When at last he left the baptismal box, I thought he would hurry away and change into something dry. I was mistaken. He said, 'I want to wear these clothes as long as I can. In fact I wish I never had to take a shower again.' "And so we walked to nearby tables and sat quietly in the

Carolina sun, hearing this newly minted Christian explain why his baptismal burial was too good to dry off. "I am now a free man," he declared. "I'm not impatient to leave prison because this wire can't shackle my soul. I know that I deserved to come here, to pay for what I did. But I also learned here that Someone else has paid for all my crimes; all my sins against God."¹

Baptism is a common practice. Through the ages, many cultures have practiced baptism: Babylonian, Egyptian, Mayan, Jewish and many more. Many religions have and still do practice baptism: The Sikhs, the Mormons, Jehovah's Witnesses, and of course nearly all groups that call themselves "Christians." But as common as it is, baptism still raises many questions, maybe especially in Christianity:

- If I've never been baptized, am I a Christian?
- Should I be baptized again if I have become a Christian since I was baptized initially?
- Should I be baptized again if I was baptized as an infant?
- What's the big deal about baptism; what do I miss if I'm never baptized?

In some groups baptism is considered essential to becoming a Christian, meaning that unless you are baptized you can't be a Christian. For example, one group declares, "The Church does not know of any means other than Baptism that assures entry into eternal (blessing). As regards children who have died without Baptism, the Church can only entrust them to the mercy of God..."² In other groups, if baptism is considered at all, it is considered optional and as merely an outward symbol of an inward faith. In fact one very large evangelical group does not practice baptism at all. We are convinced that both of those positions are wrong.

To gain what I believe is a biblical perspective and practice regarding baptism we cannot simply turn to one passage of the Bible to find it all spelled out. There is no New Testament treatise on baptism. Instead baptism is assumed because it was so much a part of the culture. But saying that does not mean we don't have good information about baptism in the Bible. In fact baptism plays a very prominent role in the New Testament.

Even before Jesus began His ministry (before Christianity, if you will), a God-fearing man gained the name "John the Baptist." *"And so John came, baptizing in the desert region and preaching a baptism of repentance for the forgiveness of sins."* (Mark 1:4) This was not the Christian baptism of the church, which would come later, but I want you to see that a water baptism related to repentance and forgiveness was a prominent part of that early message. We are told that when Jesus began His ministry, He too preached repentance and His disciples baptized people as John the Baptist did.³

Baptism is a common practice. But as common as it is, baptism still raises many questions, maybe especially in Christianity.

Not only did Jesus preach a baptism of repentance but also He was baptized. Much could be said about Jesus' baptism but suffice it to say that though He was sinless, He was identifying with our sinfulness and the necessity of repentance. But just as importantly for our discussion, notice the connection of water baptism and the Holy Spirit. Matthew 3:16 says, *"As soon as Jesus was baptized, he went up out of the water. At that moment heaven was opened, and he saw the Spirit of God descending like a*

dove and lighting on him." In that very quick review of the gospels I want you to see the connections already made between water baptism and repentance, water baptism and forgiveness, and water baptism and the ministry of the Holy Spirit. Whether you know much or little about Christian baptism, you can readily see that this all begins to tie together.

Now you might expect that water baptism would disappear after the crucifixion and resurrection of Jesus, which is the true basis of the forgiveness of sins. And you might especially expect water baptism to disappear after the coming of the Holy Spirit at Pentecost. But that is not at all what we find. First we find Jesus' clear command to baptize: *"Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, **baptizing them** in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you..."* (Matthew 28:19-20) And we see the disciples' obedience to that command: Peter replied, *"Repent and **be baptized**, every one of you, in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins. And you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit... Those who accepted his message **were baptized**, and about three thousand were added to their number that day."* (Acts 2:38,41)

What we see is that water baptism continues to be connected to the issues of acceptance of the gospel, of repentance, of forgiveness of sins, of receiving the Holy Spirit, and more. Water baptism was not only for the Jewish believers; Samaritan believers were also baptized. And as for the Jews, water baptism was connected to belief in Jesus. Deacon Philip preached to the Samaritans and it says: *"But when they believed Philip as he preached the good news of the kingdom of God and the name of Jesus Christ, they were baptized, both men and women. They*

believed and were baptized.” (Acts 8:12)

And the same was true for Gentile believers. Acts 8:35 and 36-38 says, *“Philip told him (the Ethiopian) the good news... As they traveled along the road, they came to some water and the eunuch said, ‘Look, here is water. Why shouldn't I be baptized?’ And he gave orders to stop the chariot. Then both Philip and the eunuch went down into the water and Philip baptized him.”* He heard the good news and was baptized.

What we see is that water baptism continues to be connected to the issues of acceptance of the gospel, of repentance, of forgiveness of sins, of receiving the Holy Spirit, and more.

The same was true of the Apostle Paul but note here that water baptism is also connected to the idea of receiving the Holy Spirit: *“Ananias said, ‘Brother Saul, the Lord Jesus, who appeared to you on the road as you were coming here has sent me so that you may see again and be filled with the Holy Spirit.’ Immediately, something like scales fell from Saul's eyes, and he could see again. He got up and **was baptized.**” (Acts 9:17-18)* See here again the relationship of water baptism to receiving the Holy Spirit.

And again in Acts 10:47-48 it says, *“Then Peter said, ‘Can anyone keep these people (Cornelius and guests) from being baptized with water? They have received the Holy Spirit just as we have.’ So he ordered that they **be baptized** in the name of Jesus Christ.”* See again the relationship of water baptism to receiving the Holy Spirit.

This relationship of water baptism with becoming a Christian continues: *"The Lord opened her (Lydia) heart to respond to Paul's message...She and the members of her household **were baptized**..."*(Acts 16:15)

Look at several other times it is mentioned:

- Acts 16:33 – *"At that hour of the night the (Philippian) jailer took them and washed their wounds; then immediately he and all his family **were baptized**."*
- Acts 18:8 – *"and many of the Corinthians who heard him believed and **were baptized**."*
- Acts 19:4 – *"On hearing this, they (Ephesians) **were baptized into the name of the Lord Jesus**."*

Baptism was not optional; it was mandatory and it was connected in some way with nearly everything about becoming and being a Christian. You have not heard me say that baptism causes salvation or that a person cannot be saved without baptism but you have heard me say repeatedly that water baptism is connected with nearly everything about becoming and being a Christian.

Water baptism indicates the forgiveness of our sins. There is a human response to God's grace; it is repenting-faith.

It is clear that water baptism is commanded and practiced in the Christian church. But what does it mean? What does it do? What is its significance? As I said earlier, baptism is so assumed in the New Testament that there is no single passage that spells it all out. But as we look at a number of passages in the Bible we get a fuller and fuller understanding of why baptism is so significant and why it is not optional for a Christ-follower, a Christian. I want you to see the relationship of water baptism to four essential aspects of what it means to be a Christian.

Forgiveness of Sins

First, water baptism indicates the forgiveness of our sins. Acts 2:38 says, *"Peter replied, 'Repent and be baptized, every one of you, in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins.'"* Notice three ideas drawn together: repentance, baptism in the name of Jesus, and forgiveness of sins. Repentance was called for, a change of heart, a turning around. This repentance was part of John's message, Jesus' message and the message of Jesus' disciples. Most of us would agree that faith without repentance is not real faith. For turning to Christ in faith both implies and necessitates a turning from what had our allegiance before. In that we are not saying that repentance saves us for we know that salvation is by grace alone through faith alone. But real faith repents of the former way of life and turns to Jesus. There is a human response to God's grace; it is repenting-faith.

According to this text, baptism is the outward manifestation of that repenting faith. Baptism declares and demonstrates a new allegiance to Jesus as saving-LORD!⁴ We know that salvation is by grace alone through faith alone but the one with real faith obeys and is baptized. The great English preacher, Charles Spurgeon, an effective foe of any kind of works-salvation and a strong voice for salvation by grace alone through faith alone, nonetheless understood the place of baptism in the life of the one who believes. He wrote: "For a hundred reasons, it is absolutely needful for Christ's kingdom that the believer should openly confess his faith. Do you not see that? And hence baptism, being God's way of our openly confessing our faith, he requires it to be added to faith, that the faith may be a confessing faith, not a cowardly faith; that the faith may be an open faith, not a private faith; so that the faith may be a working faith, influencing our life, and the life of others, and not a mere secret attempt for self-salvation by a silent faith which

dares not own Christ...There is no regenerating efficacy about water, or about immersion, or about baptism in any shape or form; but baptism is needful as the outward visible expression of the inward spiritual faith by which the soul is saved.

"Baptism is often the test of obedience. He who believes in Christ takes him to be his Master as well as his Savior; and Christ, therefore, says to him, 'Go and be baptized.' If the man refuses to do it, he thereby proves that he does not intend to be the disciple of the Master.

"But," says someone, "you know that baptism is a nonessential."

What do you mean by 'nonessential'?

"I mean that I can be saved without being baptized."

Will you dare to say that wicked sentence over again? Clearly, you are no servant of Jesus; you need to be saved from such a disreputable, miserable state of mind; and may the Lord save you! Oftentimes, I do believe that this little matter of believers' baptism is the test of the sincerity of our profession of love for Jesus."¹⁵

Now back to the issue of the connection of water baptism with the forgiveness of our sins: Ananias said to Saul at Saul's conversion to Christ: "*And now what are you waiting for? Get up, be baptized and wash your sins away, calling on (Jesus') name.*" (Acts 22:16) There could probably be no better dramatization of the cleansing of our hearts in forgiveness than the washing of our bodies in baptism. The baptism doesn't accomplish the washing away of sins, the forgiveness of sins, but baptism is the quintessential expression of the faith that trusts Jesus to forgive. It's the outward response to the inward reality. And again, a lack of response would indicate a lack of reality.

I want to show you another passage with which we are more familiar that also connects God's gracious salvation

with our active human response. Romans 10:9-10 says, *"If you confess with your mouth, 'Jesus is Lord,' and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved. For it is with your heart that you believe and are justified, and it is with your mouth that you confess and are saved."* It is interesting to me that we like to quote these verses but never suggest that it is the verbal testimony from the mouth that saves us. We do believe that never bearing witness to one's faith in Christ, never admitting to being a Christ-follower, does raise serious questions about the legitimacy of one's saving faith. We are even willing to say, "No confession means no faith and no faith means no salvation." Even with that, we don't believe it is the verbal witness that saves someone. Paul does not make confession with the mouth a second condition for salvation but as Douglas Moo says it, "Confession is the outward manifestation of the critical inner response."⁶ Bible scholar Leon Morris wrote, "No one is saved by the merely outward; the state of the heart is important. But Paul does not contemplate an inner state that is not reflected in outward conduct. If anyone really believes he will confess Christ, so it is natural to link the two"—the heart and the voice—the inner faith and the verbal confession of that faith.⁷

And that is precisely what is happening in Acts 2:38 and Acts 22:16. Water baptism doesn't save us but it is the first expression of the grace/faith that does. No baptism means no faith and no faith means no salvation. So closely connected are forgiveness and water baptism that we can say with the New Testament: *"Repent and be baptized, every one of you, in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins."*

Union with Christ's Death and Resurrection

The second aspect is that water baptism indicates our union with Christ in His death and resurrection. Romans 6:3-4 says *"Or don't you know that all of us who were baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into his death? We were therefore buried with him through baptism into death in order that, just as Christ was raised from the dead through the glory of the Father, we too may live a new life."* Some deny that water baptism is in mind here but that seems difficult to accept when water baptism was THE outward sign of the inward conversion. It was THE ritual of initiation into Christ and His church as demonstrated all through the book of *Acts*.

Baptism signifies death to the person I once was—death to living for myself and resurrection to a new life in Christ.

I fully recognize that this passage is not first of all a teaching about water baptism but about what happened to Christ and thus what happened to us in Him. But it is noteworthy to see the way Paul says our relationship with Christ came about. We were baptized into Christ Jesus and were baptized into His death. Notice Paul doesn't say, "All of us who were born again into Christ Jesus were born into his death, he says, "all of us who were baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into His death." He uses water baptism as the metaphor for our being joined to Christ in His death and resurrection.

It is water baptism that signifies this connection to Jesus. When He died, we died in Him; when He rose from the dead, we rose in Him. And it is water baptism that signifies that relationship. When did this connection to Christ take place? It was at baptism - because baptism is the external

sign of the inward reality. Our connection to Christ took place when we repented and believed (as symbolized by our baptism).

Baptism signifies death to the person I once was, death to my self-centered ambitions and dreams, death to living for myself and resurrection to a new life in Christ, to a new Lord of my life's ambitions, priorities, and goals, resurrection to a new way of life. That's what the prisoner, with whose story I began this sermon, was talking about—in Christ, dramatically portrayed in his baptism, he had died to the old way of life and in Christ, dramatically portrayed in his baptism, he had a whole new life. So closely connected are water baptism and being one with Christ that we can say with the New Testament: *"We were therefore buried with Jesus through baptism into death in order that, just as Christ was raised from the dead through the glory of the Father, we too may live a new life."*

The Spirit of God

The third essential aspect of Christianity to which water baptism is related is the gift of the Spirit of God. Please note I did not say the "gifts" of the Spirit, though to have the Spirit is to have His gifts. But we are talking about receiving the person of the Spirit of God—the promise that Jesus made to His disciples and us that after Jesus' ascension He would send the Holy Spirit to us to dwell with us and in us.

As I showed you earlier, at Jesus' baptism in water, the Spirit of God descended upon Him. Peter stood before the crowd at Pentecost and said Acts 2:38-39: *"Repent and be baptized, every one of you, in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins. And you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit."* Several times later in the book of Acts the reception of the Holy Spirit and water baptism are

experientially coincidental. New Testament scholar, FF Bruce wrote, "It might be expected that, when the disciples experienced the outpouring of the Holy Spirit...they would discontinue water baptism as having been superceded by something better. In fact they did not: they continued to baptize converts in water for the forgiveness of sins, but this baptism was now part of a more comprehensive initiation which took its character especially from the receiving of the Spirit."⁸

Now again, it was not that the Spirit was automatically conveyed to the one who was baptized, but that baptism was the outward sign and seal that the Holy Spirit did indeed now indwell the believer. So closely connected are water baptism and the receiving of the Spirit that we can say with the New Testament: *"Repent and be baptized, every one of you, in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins. And you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit."*

Joining God's Church

The fourth essential aspect of Christianity to which water baptism is related to our initiation into the church, God's new society, the body of Christ. Acts 2:41-42 says, *"Those who accepted his message were baptized, and about three thousand were added to their number that day. They devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching and to the fellowship, to the breaking of bread and to prayer."* Water baptism was the outward evidence of the believers' identification not only with Christ but also with Christ's people. The water baptism didn't save them meaning the water baptism didn't cause their relationship with Christ but they pledged their allegiance to Jesus and His body, the church, through their baptism. Upon baptism they were members of the church.

Again the outward water baptism was symbolical of the inward baptism of the Spirit whereby the believer is brought into union with Jesus and thus made one with Jesus' people. 1 Corinthians 12:12-13 says, "*The body is a unit, though it is made up of many parts; and though all its parts are many, they form one body. So it is with Christ. For we were all baptized by one Spirit into one body.*"

But again notice that either one (water baptism or Spirit baptism) presupposed the other. Faith, baptism, reception of the Spirit, and identification with a local church were all part of the same whole—one without the others was inconceivable because they were so closely linked. To trust Jesus was to be baptized was to join His church. They are not synonyms of each other but they are inseparably

Water baptism was the outward evidence of the believers' identification not only with Christ but also with Christ's people.

linked. Again from FF Bruce: "Baptism in water (is) the visible sign by which those who believed the gospel, repented of their sins, and acknowledged Jesus as Lord (and) were publicly incorporated into the Spirit-baptized fellowship of the new people of God."⁹

By baptism the baptized separated himself from the people, the world and priorities of before, and joined himself to the people of God, to the church, a specific church with its priorities. I think it is quite apparent that it was inconceivable to New Testament believers that one would claim to be a Christian and not be baptized and not be an identified member of a local church.

So how important is baptism? Very important: It represents the essentials of the Christian faith. The New Testament presents baptism as part and parcel of what it means to be a Christian. James said that faith without works is dead. In the same way, I think the New Testament makes it clear that faith without baptism is dead. Not that either works or baptism save us but that they are so inextricably connected that without the works or baptism it is clear that faith doesn't exist. When we separate faith from baptism from repentance from works from justification from the gift of the Spirit we dissect Christianity like a biology student dissects a lab animal. The animal ceases to be that animal when it is dissected. Likewise when we dissect Christianity into its constituent parts and try to make them operate independently of each other, it ceases to be genuine Christianity.

What a gracious command of our Lord that He would tell us to be baptized to make tangible and physical for us so much of what it means to be a Christian.

Yes, we can logically and theologically separate out regeneration from faith from repentance from baptism from confession with the mouth, and from justification. In doing so however, and keeping them separate, today we have believers who aren't confessors, confessors who aren't baptized, baptized who aren't members of the church, and members of the church who aren't Christ-followers. We hear such unbiblical thinking as, "I don't need to be baptized or become a member of a church; I'm a Christian by grace through faith alone." But Christianity is not merely the sum of its theological parts; it functions only as the whole.

What a gracious command of our Lord that He would tell us to be baptized to make tangible and physical for us so much of what it means to be a Christian:

- That our sins are washed away;
- That we are united with Christ in His death to sin and resurrection to life everlasting;
- That we have received the gift of the Holy Spirit and,
- That we are part of His body, the church.

Do you trust Jesus as your saving-Lord? Have you been baptized? Have you deliberately, publicly joined yourself to His church? I must quickly though carefully respond to a question with which I began: Should I be baptized again if I was baptized as an infant? I first of all acknowledge that there are Christians and Christian churches that understand and practice a Covenant Theology baptism of infants. In this they do not believe that the baptism saves the child but that the baptism is a sign of the new covenant just as circumcision was the sign of the old covenant for Old Testament believers. While I do not personally hold that view, I do appreciate that those who do are orthodox, biblical Christians who are welcome as fellow believers.

Unfortunately there are many more who practice infant baptism who either have no idea what it is about except as some kind of spiritual insurance for their kids or who believe that it does in fact save the child. I asked a friend of mine this week if, when he is working with college students in Norway, one of them told him that they had been baptized as a Mormon but have since become a Christian, and then they asked if they should be baptized again, what would he say? He said certainly he would encourage them to be baptized because he wouldn't technically call it being baptized "again" because it would be the first time they were baptized as a Christian.

I then asked if one of them said that he had been baptized as an infant by unbelieving parents in a church that didn't teach the gospel but now wanted to know that since he had become a Christian should he be re-baptized? My friend said he would definitely encourage baptism since the first baptism was without biblical basis, an empty ritual.

I then asked if one of them said he was baptized in a church and by parents who believe erroneously that baptism saves an infant and now he knows better and wants to know if he should be baptized as a believer, what would my friend advise? My friend said he would encourage baptism as a believer. I agree with my friend. But I will quickly add, I do not have some directive from God in this matter and therefore you will have to decide if you should be baptized if you were sprinkled as an infant

To those of you who know you ought to be baptized—Will you? You say you aren't ready? What does that mean? You aren't ready to have your sins forgiven? You aren't ready to be joined to Christ in His death and resurrection, or to receive the Holy Spirit, or to belong to God's family? What aren't you ready for? Well you say, I just don't feel ready? What does that mean? You have to wait for a feeling? Did you have to wait for a certain feeling to respond to the gospel? Or did you realize your need for a savior and you trusted Jesus? Will you trust Him now to minister His grace to you even as you pledge your allegiance to Him in baptism?

End Notes

- ¹ *Christian Century*, Oct 21, 1992, page 926 – found also in Vander Zee, *Christ, Baptism and the Lord's Supper*, p. 120
- ² Catholic Catechism: 1257 and 1261
- ³ See Matthew 4:17; John 3:22; 4:1-2
- ⁴ Ajith Fernando, *NIV Application Commentary, Acts*, p. 106
- ⁵ Charles Spurgeon, Oct 13, 1889, "Baptism Essential to Obedience"
- ⁶ Douglas Moo, *Romans*, p. 657
- ⁷ Leon Morris, *Romans*, p. 384
- ⁸ FF Bruce, *Acts*, p. 69
- ⁹ *Ibid*, p. 70

Chapter Five

When your Child wants to be Baptized

We are excited that your child has expressed a desire to be baptized and we want to join you in helping prepare them for that day. Because SGC allows baptism only for those who are 12 years of age or older we'd like them to become a "baptismal candidate" and use the time between now and their 12th birthday to prepare. To prepare we'd like you and them to do two things. First of all we'd like you to observe your child's behavior and attitude during the time they are a candidate. We all know that when someone is truly "born again" it changes his or her life. The changes may not be huge but they are real. We wish for you to confirm your child's testimony of faith in Jesus as saving-Lord as evidenced by their actions and attitudes. Secondly, we'd like you to help them complete a course of study. We currently recommend the course entitled, *Growing Strong in God's Family*, published by the Navigators. They are available to you and your child at no charge from the church office. We still want the child to wait until he or she is 12, so you can work through the course anytime before then. We also believe that the younger a child is the more important it is that the initiative for baptism come from the child and that their motivation to complete the course is further evidence of their readiness.

There are two reasons why we ask children to wait until they are 12 to be baptized. First of all, because we want them to have the maturity to better understand the spiritual significance of baptism. Jesus was 12 when he was taken to the Temple to prepare for his Bar Mitzvah. Jews through centuries have their children wait until 12 or 13 years of age before they were brought into full status in the

congregation. Through the centuries, Christian churches of many denominations have taken children through a confirmation period when the children were about 12 or 13. Modern education theory informs us of what has been obvious for centuries, that children develop an ability to think abstractly at about 12 or 13.

It is also true that many children have multiple "salvation" experiences during the years they are growing up. Most parents know not to either confirm or deny the earlier spiritual experiences of their children but instead allow the Spirit of God to work in them, as He will. For example, if a child makes a profession of faith at a very early age and then questions that experience as they get older, it is unwise for a parent to assure the child that they are already a Christian based on the earlier experience. It is wiser to ask questions and allow the child to think through the issue with their increased "maturity" and the guidance of the Spirit. Such questioning by a child may happen many times in the elementary and adolescent years. We don't want to give assurance of faith when the Spirit is not giving it. During these formative years, we think it is best to allow for such questioning.

For these reasons we strongly suggest that children prepare for baptism as a "candidate" and wait until 12 years of age to be baptized. We look forward to talking to you and your child about their baptism when they are 12.

To Children

We are excited that you desire to be baptized and we want to help prepare you for that day. Because SGC allows baptism only for those who are 12 years of age or older we'd like you to use the time between now and your 12th birthday to prepare. We'd like you to do two things. First of all, we all know that when someone is truly "born again" it

changes his or her life. The changes may not be huge but they are real. So we'd like you to demonstrate by your actions and attitudes that your faith in Jesus is real and changing your life. We wish for your parent(s) to confirm your testimony of faith in Jesus as your saving-Lord as evidenced by your actions. Second, we'd like you to complete a course of study with your parent(s) that will help you understand more of what it means to become and be a follower of Jesus Christ. We still want you to wait until you are 12 to be baptized, therefore you can work through the book anytime before then.

There are two reasons why we ask you to wait until you are 12. First of all, we want you to have the maturity to better understand the spiritual meaning and importance of baptism. Jesus was 12 when he was taken to the Temple to prepare for his Bar Mitzvah. Throughout history, this is the time in life when children moved to adulthood and became active in the life of the church. Secondly, it is important that you understand the reality of your confession of faith, and we encourage you to ask your parents (and Sunday school teachers) any questions that come to mind. They are there to help you get ready for your baptism.

We are encouraged that you are interested, and pray God will continue to help you learn more about Him and grow in your faith as you prepare to be baptized after your 12th birthday.

Dr. Jerry Nelson
Pastor
Southern Gables Church

Appendix A

Additional Notes and Resources on the Lord's Supper

As to whether the meal with Jesus' disciples was the actual Passover meal (as in the Synoptic Gospels) or another meal just prior to Passover (as John seems to note) we cannot be absolutely certain but Mark clearly calls it the Passover meal. (See R.T. France *The Gospel of Mark*, 559ff for good review of the issues. Most commentaries deal with this issue).

The Passover not only commemorated the past event of the Exodus but also looked forward to the Messiah's coming. "In that night they were redeemed and in that night they will be redeemed in the future." (Attributed to Rabbi Jehoshua b. Hananya c. A.D. 90—a footnote in William Lane, *Mark*, 501).

After the meal the third cup is presented with the following words: "May the all-merciful One make us worthy of the days of the Messiah and of the life of the world to come. He brings the salvation of his king. He shows covenant-faithfulness to his Anointed, to David and to his seed forever. He makes peace in his heavenly places. May he secure peace for us and for all Israel. And say you, Amen."

Should Christians celebrate Passover? Some churches celebrate a seder (Jewish meal commemorating the Passover of Exodus) on Thursday evening of Holy Week. While nothing prohibits a seder, it is clear from the New Testament that the Lord's Supper supercedes Passover or at least reinterprets it. The Passover celebration passes over into the Lord's Supper celebration. The type, the shadow passes over into the real and substantial. Just as a

fruit blossom on a tree passes over into the fruit that it represented. (See *The Suffering Savior*, Krummacher, p. 44)

Passover celebrates a different event, namely the exodus from Egypt. The Lord's Supper celebrates the cross.

Passover celebrates the old covenant. The Lord's Supper celebrates the new covenant.

Passover, just like the other sacrifices of the Old Testament, looks forward to the cross. The Lord's Supper is the fulfillment of that and looks back on that event and forward to the end of the age.

Just as the sacrifice of Jesus completes/fulfills the animal sacrifices of the Old Testament, so the Lord's Supper completes/fulfills the Passover. I'm not terribly sympathetic to Christians (Gentile or Jewish) celebrating Passover since it has been fulfilled in Christ.

Leviticus 23:4 – *"The LORD's Passover begins at twilight on the fourteenth day of the first month."*

Exodus 12:3-8 – *"Tell the whole community of Israel that on the tenth day of this month each man is to take a lamb for his family, one for each household...The animals you choose must be year-old males without defect, and you may take them from the sheep or the goats. Take care of them until the fourteenth day of the month, when all the people of the community of Israel must slaughter them at twilight. Then they are to take some of the blood and put it on the sides and tops of the doorframes of the houses where they eat the lambs. That same night they are to eat the meat roasted over the fire, along with bitter herbs, and bread made without yeast."*

The meal consisted of:

Unleavened bread ("bread of affliction" Deut 16:3)

Wine

Bitter herbs

Sauce of dried fruit, wine and spices

Roasted Passover lamb (1 Corinthians 5:7 – "*Christ, our Passover lamb, has been sacrificed.*")

- "Remembering is not to entertain a pallid idea of a past event in one's mind, but to make the event present again so that it controls the will and becomes potent in our lives for good or ill." (Hunter in David Garland, *The NIV Application Commentary, Mark*, p. 534)
- When we speak to each other there not only words but also "body language." The sacraments are God's 'body language' to us. (Vander Zee, *Christ, baptism, and the Lord's Supper*, p. 60-61)
- "Eating Jesus' body and drinking his blood is the most vivid way imaginable of being both participants and beneficiaries of his death on the cross and the resurrection by which it won victory over sin and death." (Vander Zee, p. 153)
- "Worthy receivers, outwardly partaking of the visible elements, in its sacrament, do then also, inwardly by faith, really and indeed... spiritually receive and feed upon Christ crucified, and all the benefits of his death: the body and blood of Christ being then... really and spiritually present to the faith of believers in that ordinance, as the elements are to their outward senses." (Westminster Confession 29.7)
- "We have already seen that Jesus Christ is the only

food by which our souls are nourished; but as it is distributed to us by the word of the Lord, which he has appointed an instrument for that purpose, that word is also called bread and water. Now what is said of the word applies as well to the sacrament of the Supper, by means of which the Lord leads us to communion with Jesus Christ. For seeing we are so weak that we cannot receive him with true heartfelt trust, when he is presented to us by simple doctrine and preaching, the Father of mercy, (condescending) to our infirmity, has been pleased to add to his word a visible sign, by which he might represent the substance of his promises, to confirm and fortify us by delivering us from all doubt and uncertainty. Since, then, there is something so mysterious and incomprehensible in saying that we have communion with the body and the blood of Jesus Christ, and we on our part are so rude and gross that we cannot understand the least things of God, it was of importance that we should be given to understand it as far as our capacity could admit." (John Calvin in "Short Treatise on the Supper of Our Lord")

Good Resources:

Christ, Baptism and the Lord's Supper, Leonard Vander Zee

I Corinthians, Craig Blomberg

The First Epistle to the Corinthians, Anthony Thistleton

Sunday Dinner, William Willimon

The Lord's Supper, Robert Letham

John, Donald Carson (re. John 6)

"*Westminster Confession of Faith*"

"*Short Treatise on the Lord's Supper*," John Calvin

Appendix B

Baptism as the First Act of Obedience as seen in Scripture

Acts 2:37-39 – *"When the people heard this, they were cut to the heart and said to Peter and the other apostles, 'Brothers, what shall we do?'"*

"Peter replied, 'Repent and be baptized, every one of you, in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins. And you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit. The promise is for you and your children and for all who are far off – for all whom the Lord our God will call.'"

"With many other words he warned them; and he pleaded with them, 'Save yourselves from this corrupt generation.' Those who accepted his message were baptized, and about three thousand were added to their number that day."

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

Acts 8:34-38 – *"The eunuch asked Philip, 'Tell me, please, who is the prophet talking about, himself or someone else?' Then Philip began with that very passage of Scripture and told him the good news about Jesus."*

"As they traveled along the road, they came to some water and the eunuch said, 'Look, here is water. Why shouldn't I be baptized?' And he gave orders to stop the chariot. Then both Philip and the eunuch went down into the water and Philip baptized him."

Acts 9:17-19 – *"Then Ananias went to the house and entered it. Placing his hands on Saul, he said, 'Brother Saul, the Lord—Jesus, who appeared to you on the road as you were coming here—has sent me so that you may see again and be filled with the Holy Spirit.' Immediately, something like scales fell from Saul's eyes, and he could see again. He got up and was baptized, and after taking some food, he regained his strength."*

Peter to Cornelius (first Gentile convert):

Acts 11:43-48 – *"All the prophets testify about him that everyone who believes in him receives forgiveness of sins through his name.' While Peter was still speaking these words, the Holy Spirit came on all who heard the message. The circumcised believers who had come with Peter were astonished that the gift of the Holy Spirit had been poured out even on the Gentiles. For they heard them speaking in tongues and praising God.*

"Then Peter said, 'Can anyone keep these people from being baptized with water? They have received the Holy Spirit just as we have.' So he ordered that they be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ."

Acts 16:29-33 – *"The jailer called for lights, rushed in and fell trembling before Paul and Silas. He then brought them out and asked, 'Sirs, what must I do to be saved?' They replied, 'Believe in the Lord Jesus, and you will be saved—you and your household.' Then they spoke the word of the Lord to him and to all the others in his house. At that hour of the night the jailer took them and washed their wounds; then immediately he and all his family were baptized."*

Acts 18:7-8 – *"Then Paul left the synagogue and went next door to the house of Titius Justus, a worshiper of God. Crispus, the synagogue ruler, and his entire household believed in the Lord; and many of the Corinthians who heard him believed and were baptized."*

