



******"For I determined not to know any thing among you, save Jesus Christ, and him crucified,"* I Corinthians 2:2.

The Church Ordinances

Lesson Aim: The study of Articles 12, 21, 13.

12. Water baptism (immersion) to be administered to believers only and by divine authority as given to Missionary Baptist churches. 21. We believe that baptism to be valid must be administered by the authority of a true scriptural Missionary Baptist church, and we believe that a so-called Baptist church which knowingly receives alien immersion is not a scriptural Baptist church, and its ordinances are not valid. 13. The Lord's Supper as a church ordinance is to be administered to baptized believers only and in scriptural church capacity.

L504. Date: February 1960. **Text:** Matthew 3:1-8, 13-17; I Corinthians 11:23-26. **Topic:** Baptism; Church: Ordinances of; Lord's Supper.

INTRODUCTION — Today, we study the church ordinances. An ordinance is that which has been ordained, commanded, or instituted. A true church ordinance is that ritual or practice which the Lord Jesus set up and ordered His church to practice.

There are two ordinances in the New Testament church. They are Baptism and the Lord's Supper. The Roman Catholic view that there are seven sacraments (or, ordinances which confer grace and help save the soul) has no foundation in the Bible. Some people read the account of Jesus washing the disciples' feet, John 13:2-17, and insist that foot-washing is to be a church ordinance also. However, a church ordinance is to show by symbol the sacrifice of Jesus in our behalf with its resulting redemption. The washing of feet is an expression of brotherly love and humility. It has no reflection to the sacrifice of Jesus and thus is not ordained to be perpetually observed in the Lord's churches.

The church ordinances are important. While it is not possible to get into

membership in a Baptist church without baptism, there are many church members who have never observed the Lord's Supper. An attitude of indifference on their part reflects their lack of understanding of a sacred command of the Lord. We know that the ordinances have no part in the salvation of the soul. They are ordinances, not sacraments. It is impossible, however, for one to be a fully obedient Christian and refuse to obey the Lord's command to observe Baptism and the Lord's Supper in remembrance of Him. With a sense of holy reverence every believer should join his brethren in the local church in observance of its ordinances.

EXPOSITION

I. Baptism, Matthew 3:1-8, 13-17.

1. Baptism is to be a confession of faith, verses 1-8. John the Baptist came preaching that men should repent of their sins because the promised Messiah was about to appear. ("Messiah" is the Hebrew word for the Greek word "Christ." Both mean "The Anointed One.") Those who believed his preaching sincerely repented of their sins and confessed their faith by submitting to water baptism (by immersion) administered by John the Baptist. He refused to baptize any who had not sincerely repented and manifested it by a change in his life. Thus the original purpose of baptism was confession, not as a part of redemption. It is still so. Those who submit to baptism today, under the authority of a New Testament church, are to do so in honest confession of their personal trust in Jesus Christ as Saviour and Lord. To receive baptism for any other purpose invalidates it as Christian baptism.

2. Baptism is to be in imitation of the Lord, verses 13-17. Jesus came from Galilee to where John the Baptist was baptizing in the River Jordan. He desired baptism at the hands of John who hesitated because of a sense of unworthiness. Upon Jesus' insistence, John baptized Him. Immediately the heavens were opened, the Holy Spirit descended as a dove and lit upon Him, and the Father spoke from heaven: "*This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased.*" Why was Jesus baptized? (1) It may have been to identify Himself with John's ministry and the penitent remnant who submitted to baptism. (2) It may have been to give the Father opportunity to express approval of His Son at the beginning of His public ministry. (3) It may have been that He wanted to set an example for His disciples who would soon be gathered. (4) It may have been that He sought to set out His coming sacrifice by symbol (death, burial and resurrection) before His public ministry began.

Whatever the reason, Jesus said, “*Thus it becometh us to fulfill all righteousness.*” He has set the example for all who trust Him. In baptism, we imitate our Lord.

3. Baptism must be properly administered. It is generally agreed that four things are essential in order to have valid baptism. (1) There must be the proper candidate—one who has confessed his sins and trusted in Jesus as Saviour. Read Matthew 3:5-9 and Acts 8:36-38. When one has confessed his sin and trusted in Jesus, he is saved, John 5:24. Therefore, the proper candidate is one who is already saved by faith. To baptize an unsaved person is of no advantage whatever, but probably serves as a handicap to that person later finding the Lord as Saviour. (2) There must be the proper purpose—the confession of faith in Jesus as a personal Saviour. Baptism which is administered for any other reason is not valid and is not to be accepted as valid by any church. As shown above, baptism is intended as a public confession of faith. Private baptisms (which some religious groups administer) are to be seriously questioned. Baptism performed to obtain forgiveness of sin is absolutely not valid and must not be accepted by a church of the Lord. (3) There must be the proper mode—immersion of the candidate once, backwards, in water in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit. Valid baptism is by immersion only. That performed by sprinkling or pouring of water is not baptism. In Acts 8:38-39 we read of baptism being a “going down into the water” and a “coming up out of the water.” In Romans 6:3-4 we read that baptism is a burial and resurrection. Put these together and you have a picture of immersion. Moreover, the Greek word (*baptizo*) which is translated “baptize” means “to plunge, to dip, to immerse” and could never mean sprinkling or pouring. Only immersion can be valid. (4) There must be the proper authority—a church of the Lord Jesus Christ. The authority to baptize was not given to the individual Christian, nor to the ordained ministers. It rests solely in the local church. Not even denominations have the right to authorize baptism. The pastor simply acts as the agent of the church in performing the act of baptism. Valid baptism must be performed by a true church—one holding the doctrines of the Holy Bible. A church holding false doctrines cannot administer scriptural baptism.

Baptists hold a unique position regarding Baptism. We reject all so-called baptisms performed in the wrong manner as regards candidate, purpose, mode, or authority. The church which knowingly receives “alien” (that is, unscriptural) baptism has lost the right to be respected as a true congregation in the will of the Lord. Further ordinances it administers are not valid and cannot be accepted by other churches. This is why we demand

baptism of those who come to us from other denominational groups who hold unscriptural doctrines and practices. We must never become lax in this matter.

II. The Lord's Supper, I Corinthians 11:23-26.

There has been a question in the minds of some as to what this ordinance should be called. Various ones have designated it as “The Sacrament,” “The Eucharist,” or “The Lord's Supper.” The Bible calls it “The Lord's Supper” and no other name should be given it, I Corinthians 11:20.

1. The Lord's Supper is of divine institution, verses 23-24. The original institution of the Lord's Supper is recorded in Matthew 26:26-29; Mark 14:22-25; and Luke 22:17-20. Each of these accounts stresses that it was instituted by the Lord Jesus. With the remains of bread and wine left from the Jewish Passover meal which He and the disciples had observed, He gave this symbolic picture of His death—a crucified body and shed blood. It becomes binding upon the church to observe it just as much as baptism is binding. This Supper is of no human institution and thus it becomes an important part of the ministry of the church. The church which neglects this ordinance is as guilty as the church which neglected baptism. The Lord has instituted the Supper. The church must observe it.

2. It is symbolic in nature. We understand Jesus to be speaking figuratively when He says, “*This is my blood of the new testament*” and “*This is my body*,” Matthew 26:26-28. Again, Roman Catholics seriously err at this point. They believe that when the priest performs the mass the bread becomes the actual flesh and the wine the actual blood of Jesus, so that He is actually crucified again. Thus, according to their theory, Jesus is crucified over and over so they may have forgiveness. Of course, the Bible strictly denies this, Hebrews 10:10-14. In the Lord's Supper we partake of a bit of bread and drink a bit of wine (or grape juice) thereby remembering the crucified body and shed blood of Jesus. The blessing of the ordinance is in the heart of him who observes it and thereby communes with the Lord, not in any merit in the elements used. The elements are symbols of the body and blood, and nothing more.

3. The Lord's Supper is to serve as a memorial, verse 24d. It is when the Lord's Supper is observed in loving remembrance of the Saviour that it is properly observed. Many congregations are asked to bow in an attitude of

prayer as they partake of the supper that they may the more easily commune with Him. Other denominations seem to think the Supper is to be for fellowship among believers. It is intended for fellowship and communion between the believer and his Lord. (Thus we do not place a reproach upon one of another faith when we do not invite him to join us in the Supper.) The Supper fails its purpose unless it quickens one's heart in remembrance of Calvary and leads to greater dedication to the crucified and risen Lord. It should be partaken of prayerfully and lovingly. It is of great significance to the true believer.

4. The Lord's Supper should be regularly observed. The Bible does not command any certain time for the Supper to be observed. It may be observed weekly, monthly, quarterly, or annually. It is wise, however, to have a set time when the church observes the supper lest it be overlooked and neglected. Perhaps most churches observe it once each quarter—four times a year. This is often enough for each church member to observe it at least once a year (if he is interested) and yet not so often as to make it commonplace and unmeaning. (It is not wise to condemn any church for observing it often or not. The important thing is to be consistent and not neglect the ordinance.)

5. The Lord's Supper should follow baptism. Baptists are accused of being “narrow” or “close-communication” concerning the Lord's Supper. Actually, we are close concerning baptism. We believe that no one is qualified to come to the Lord's table until he has confessed his faith by baptism. Therefore, those of other denominations, whose baptism we cannot accept, are not invited to the Lord's Supper with us. (Many churches restrict the participants in the Supper to members of the local church, not inviting other Baptists to join. This is wise, though not specifically commanded in the Bible.) The person who has followed the Lord in baptism as a penitent believer is qualified to come to his church as a participant in the Lord's Supper. He who has refused to submit to scriptural baptism, even though he is a true believer, is to be excluded.

6. The Lord's Supper is to be consistently observed, verse 26. The Supper is to be observed by the Lord's churches, “till he come.” The ordinances have not lost their validity. Baptism and the Lord's Supper will never cease to be commanded and observed so long as there are true churches to observe them. (Of course, there would be no need for them in heaven.) These ordinances are a witness to men—saved and unsaved. The observance of the supper is a reminder of the sacrifice of the Lord, our redemption through faith in Him, and the sure fact that He is coming again. This witness needs to be given over and over again. The Lord's churches

must be faithfully consistent in observing the ordinances until He comes to claim His own. When did you last observe the Lord's Supper?

CONCLUSION—The ordinances, Baptism and the Lord's Supper, are sacred obligations upon the churches. No church can be faithful to her Lord if she fails (1) to observe them, or (2) if she observes them for the wrong purpose. They have nothing to do with forgiveness of sins. They witness to the sacrifice of Jesus for man's sins and the redemption which comes thereby. Surely the observance of these ordinances should lead the believer to greater personal dedication to the Lord. Since they have been entrusted to the church we should have an increasing respect for and loyalty to our own church which Jesus Christ has thus honored.

QUESTIONS

1. What is a “church ordinance”?
2. How many church ordinances are there? Name them.
3. What is the difference in an “ordinance” and a “sacrament”?
4. What is the purpose of baptism?
5. Why do you think Jesus was baptized? Why were you baptized?
6. What four things are necessary to make baptism valid?
7. What is “alien immersion”? What happens to the church that receives it?
8. Tell of the institution of the Lord's Supper.
9. Discuss the Lord's Supper as a memorial; as a symbol.
10. What is the relation of Baptism and the Lord's Supper?
11. How could the ordinances become more meaningful to your church?