



The Ordinances of the Church: Water Baptism & The Lord's Supper

The ordinance of baptism by immersion is commanded by the Scriptures. All who repent and believe on Christ as Savior and Lord should be baptized so they can declare publicly that they have died with Christ and have been raised with Him to walk in newness of life.

The Lord's Supper, consisting of the elements—bread and the “fruit of the vine”—is significant in three areas:

1. **We remember** what the Lord did for us on the cross (1 Corinthians 11:26)

2. **We affirm** that we share in the divine nature of our Lord Jesus Christ (2 Peter 1:4)
3. **We acknowledge and declare** the prophecy of His second coming (1 Corinthians 11:26)

We also corporately know that it will be something we do often until He comes back!¹

The following gives a deeper understanding of this truth:

Biblical Christianity is not ritualistic or sacramental. *Sacramentalism* is the belief that special grace is bestowed on participants who engage in certain prescribed rituals. It is usually held by sacramental churches that the grace is received whether or not the participant has any active faith—all one has to do is go through the form.

Although obedience to two ordinances is prescribed in the New Testament, no special merit is attached to

¹ "The Ordinances of the Church," The Assemblies of God, <https://ag.org/Beliefs/Statement-of-Fundamental-Truths#6> (Accessed August 30, 2017).

such obedience. These two ceremonies, which the Lord instituted and commanded, are to be understood as occasions of memorial. There is no saving power in the mechanical performance of these acts; the blessing one may receive is a matter of the heart.²

A matter of the heart! Think on that for a moment. Is your heart turned towards God? Ordinances like baptism and communion are observances that help us turn ourselves toward God in powerful and specific ways.

Water Baptism

Matthew 28:19 (ESV) Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit,

Baptism is appropriately administered only to those who give a believable profession of faith in Jesus Christ. It is

² Menzies, W. W. (1993). *Bible Doctrines: A Pentecostal Perspective*. (S. M. Horton, Ed.) (pp. 111–112). Springfield, MO: Logion Press.

a commandment of the Lord.

The Mode and Meaning of Baptism

The practice of baptism in the New Testament was carried out in one way: the person being baptized was **immersed**, or put completely under the water and then brought back up again. Baptism by immersion is therefore the “mode” of baptism. This is evident for the following reasons:

1. The Greek word ‘baptize’ means, “to **plunge**” something in water.

2. The sense “immerse” is found or required in the several New Testament passages.

Mark 1:5 (ESV) And all the country of Judea and all Jerusalem were going out to him and were being baptized by him **in** the river Jordan, confessing their sins.

Mark 1:10 (ESV) And when he came up out of the water, immediately he saw the heavens being torn open and the Spirit descending on him like a dove.

Acts 8:38–39 (ESV) ³⁸ And he commanded the chariot to stop, and they both went down into the water, Philip and the eunuch, and he baptized him. ³⁹ And when they came up out of the water, the Spirit of the Lord carried Philip away, and the eunuch saw him no more, and went on his way rejoicing.

3. Baptism is a Picture of:

- a. washing
- b. death and resurrection with Christ

4. At Baptism, the subject should expect:

- a. The presence of the Holy Spirit
- b. The approval of the Father
- c. New level of ministry.

5. People who are baptized should have a believable profession of faith.

Acts 10:47–48 (ESV) ⁴⁷ “Can anyone withhold water for baptizing these people, who have received the Holy Spirit just as we have?” ⁴⁸ And he commanded them to be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ. Then they asked him to remain for some days.

6. Baptism is an outward sign of an inward regeneration.

Galatians 3:27 (ESV) For as many of you as were baptized into Christ have put on Christ.

7. Why do some churches baptize infants?

The answer: they believe that baptism **causes** regeneration.

8. Baptism brings favor that comes with obedience, the reassurance of having a clear experience of dying and rising with Christ and the washing away of sins.

The Lord's Supper

While Baptism is a sign of the beginning of a person's Christian life, the Lord's Supper is an ordinance or ordained or anointed to be observed by the believer as a sign of continuing fellowship with Christ.

What is the Lord's Supper?

The Lord's Supper, which is also referred to as communion, is a ceremonial meal of bread and "fruit of the vine" that commemorates what Jesus Christ did on the cross for us. Unlike the once-for-all nature of water baptism, communion is to be repeated with great frequency in our lives as an active memorial.

1. Communion had its origins in the Jewish Passover festival.

Exodus 12:12-13 (ESV) On that same night I will pass through Egypt and strike down every firstborn—both men and animals—and I will bring judgment on all the

gods of Egypt. I am the LORD. The blood will be a sign for you on the houses where you are; and when I see the blood, I will pass over you. No destructive plague will touch you when I strike Egypt.

In the Old Testament cultures, the way for God's people to atone for their sins was through an animal sacrifice.

2. **Jesus gave Passover a new significance.**

Matthew 26: 26-29 (ESV) While they were eating, Jesus took bread, gave thanks and broke it, and gave it to His disciples, saying, "Take and eat; this is My body." Then He took the cup, gave thanks and offered it to them, saying, "Drink from it, all of you. This is My blood of the covenant, which is poured out for many for the forgiveness of sins. I tell you, I will not drink of this fruit of the vine from now on until that day when I drink it anew with you in my Father's kingdom.

How should we observe communion (the Lord's Supper)?

The Apostle Paul gives us key insights and instructions about communion in 1 Corinthians 10 and 11.

1. Communion allows us to participate in what Christ has done.

1 Corinthians 10:16 (ESV) Is not the cup of thanksgiving for which we give thanks a participation in the blood of Christ? And is not the bread that we break a participation in the body of Christ?

2. Communion is a picture of Christian unity.

1 Corinthians 10:17 (ESV) Because there is one loaf, we, who are many, are one body, for we all partake of the one loaf.

It's not by accident that "communion" and "community" share the same root. It emphasizes the fellowship that we have with Christ and with one another.

3. Communion helps us remember what Jesus did for us.

1 Corinthians 11:23-24 (ESV) 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.”

Community allows us to celebrate the past. Our society does not have much regard for history. We are a “what have you done for me lately” culture.

But the Bible certainly was not. The people of God were repeatedly commanded to observe festivals. Holidays and set up memorials to commemorate important significant events in their history.

4. Communion is symbolic of God’s **new plan** for His people.

1 Corinthians 11:12 (ESV) 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.”

5. Communion reminds us to proclaim the central message of the gospel.

1 Corinthians 11:26 (ESV) For whenever you eat this bread and drink this cup, you proclaim the Lord's death until He comes.

Note: We are commanded to do this until Jesus comes back to take us to be with Him. Until His return, we have work to do.

The Lord's supper also celebrates the future. We look forward to the day when Jesus gets to takes communion again (Matthew. 26:29).

6. Communion comes with a warning.

1 Corinthians 11:27-30 (ESV) 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.

Communion is only for those who are committed followers of Jesus. Participating without being saved can lead to sickness and even death. This shows us how important this act is in the eyes of God.

GROUP STUDY QUESTIONS:

1. Why do the Assemblies of God not observe the seven sacraments the Catholic church observes?
2. What examples or verses from the Bible would you use to explain that water baptism is for believers only.
3. Why is water baptism by immersion important?
4. What does the Lord's Supper help us to see?
5. What attitude should a believer possess when they partake of the Lord's Supper?

6. What does it mean to partake of the Lord's Supper "in a worthy manner?"