

Communion and Baptism: Identify

Hebrews 8:6

Announcements:

1. 4-6th grade going back to school in phases
2. Board: I'm a Church Member
 1. Breakfast
 2. Prayer
3. Women of Faith, Wednesday @ 10am, in Parsonage
4. OCC Packing Party November 14
5. Church Potluck November 15, sign up

The one thing I want us to remember and leave with this morning is that baptism and communion are actions of obedience that identify us with what Christ has done for us, promises in the future, and the body of Christ.

We identify with events, people, actions, emotions. For those who have been through a traumatic event, you can somewhat identify with another person who has been through a similar traumatic event. If you have had someone break into your house, there are certain emotions you will feel and it will shape your thinking. If you have been fired, there are certain emotions you will feel and it may shape your thinking. If you have been in a bad car wreck, there are certain emotions you will experience, effects to your body that often happen, and it will shape your thinking the next time you get in a car. The same can be said of joyous events. If you have had a child, you have had similar experiences as others who have had children. It shapes your thinking for sure. It gives you a certain understanding that those who haven't had kids just can't know. It requires of you to think of that child and put that child first. It puts you into a place to have a positive impact upon someone and to disciple them to live in this world and hopefully towards a relationship with Jesus.

Baptism and communion identify us with the body of Christ [the church] and who Jesus is and what He has done for us as well as what He promises for our future. This is week 6 of our 7 week series, "7 weeks to a Better Body."

Before we dive in, there are a couple items to get out of the way first. Baptism and communion are both commands given to all believers.

Matthew 28:19 says, "Therefore, go and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit." As disciples are made, baptism should follow.

Luke 22:19 "He took some bread and gave thanks to God for it. Then he broke it in pieces and gave it to the disciples, saying, "This is my body, which is given for you. Do this to remember me." Do this to remember me.

We are going to start with baptism this morning and later look at communion. We are going to ask these questions of each: what?, why? how?, who?, and when?

There actually is a lot of debate about baptism. Can an infant be baptized? Is baptism required for salvation? Can you be baptized for those who have already passed away? When baptized, is that when the Holy Spirit comes upon you? Are you part of the body of Christ before or after baptism? How should you be baptized: immersion or sprinkling or pouring? We aren't going to take time to dive fully into these questions this morning. But we may touch on them to some degree.

Let's look at Baptism first.

Baptism is a symbol of relationship with Christ. It identifies us to his death and resurrection. It identifies us with those who before us have received Jesus as their Lord and Savior, and those after us that will do that same. Baptism gets its meaning from the death and resurrection of Jesus. It is not for tradition and it is not for religious ritual.

Baptism does not save us. There are some scriptures that are unclear about this. They almost make it sound like you salvation comes through repentance, believing, and baptism. But a quick look at those scriptures and the context directly surrounding those scriptures gives a better picture. Baptism is a byproduct of salvation. It is something we do to testify that we have died to our old self and that we have been given a new eternal life in Christ.

One of those confusing verses is Mark 16:16. It says, "Anyone who believes and is baptized will be saved. But anyone who refuses to believe will be condemned." But listen to the last half of the verse. "But anyone who refuses to believe will be condemned." Why is it that it doesn't say, "But anyone who refuses to believe and be baptized will be condemned"? And then when you look at the context of scripture (remember scripture

must be used to understand scripture) you hear, not once, but many times over that salvation is by faith alone, it is a free gift of God. There are no works that we can do or add to what Jesus did to get salvation. Lastly, look at the response Jesus gives to the man on the cross next to Him. When the man spoke of his own sin and asked Jesus to remember him, Jesus's response was not, "Can you get baptized?" The response was, "Today you shall be with me in paradise."

It is through Christ alone that salvation comes and is secured.

Hebrews 8:6 says, "But now Jesus, our High Priest, has been given a ministry that is far superior to the old priesthood, for He is the one who mediates for us a far better covenant with God, based on better promises." He mediates. We don't mediate. We don't have anything to add.

Baptism is by immersion. The Greek word means to be immersed into.

How does one get baptized?

Through water. Does that water have any special power? No. But, what it is a symbol of judgment, cleansing, and salvation.

Throughout the O.T. you see water as something that cleansed and you saw the picture of salvation. Just as for Noah when the floods came. The people of the world would not listen and turn their hearts to God. In turn the floods came and they died, but Noah and his family was saved because of the ark. Look at the Hebrew people when they left Egypt. They came to the Red Sea and God parted the waters for them to walk through. But, when they had gone through, the Egyptian soldiers chased after the Hebrews and the waters fell back upon them. Look at Jonah. The great storm came and they threw him overboard and a great fish swallowed him.

God spared His people through waters which should have killed them, but instead brought salvation. All of these events looked forward to what Christ would do on the cross and the resurrection that would follow. 1 Peter 3:18-21 gives us this picture.

Baptism is symbolic of our salvation. It is a testimony of God's saving us. It's a testimony of a better promise, a better covenant. Jesus died on the

cross, was buried, and then risen from the grave. When we are baptized, we are identifying with that very act.

Romans 6:3-4 "Or have you forgotten that when we were joined with Christ Jesus in baptism, we joined him in his death? For we died and were buried with Christ by baptism. And just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glorious power of the Father, now we also may live new lives."

Colosians 2:12 "For you were buried with Christ when you were baptized. And with him you were raised to new life because you trusted the mighty power of God, who raised Christ from the dead."

To be baptized is to identify with what Christ has done. When we are baptized we are telling those around us who we claim to be the authority of our life, who we now follow, that we have been cleansed from the stain of sin and given a new life to live in Christ with the promise of a future with Him, resurrected as He was to new life with Him on earth and in heaven after we die. We have been united with Christ.

So, do we get the Holy Spirit at baptism?

Romans 5:5 "And this hope will not lead to disappointment. For we know how dearly God loves us, because he has given us the Holy Spirit to fill our hearts with his love."

2 Corinthians 1:22 "and He has identified us as His own by placing the Holy Spirit in our hearts as the first installment that guarantees everything He has promised us."

These and many other scriptures point to the giving of the Holy Spirit when we receive Jesus as our Lord and Savior.

Why should I get baptized?

To obey what Christ Jesus has told us to do. Again, it isn't an act of obedience that leads to salvation, it is a response of our salvation. There is something supernatural about it. It testifies to others, but also to ourselves as well. It testifies that we now have a clear conscience in Christ as 1 Peter 3:19 says, "but as a response to God from a clean conscience."

Who should get baptized?

Those who claim to be followers of Christ, disciples of Christ.

When should I get baptized?

After you say, “Yes, I want to follow Jesus”. There is no time period or a growing in our faith, or certain acts that need to be done before hand. Multiple times throughout the early church you see how those who received Jesus as their savior ‘repented and were baptized.’ Look at the Ethiopian Eunuch and his salvation. Philip explained what he was reading in Isaiah, and the Eunuch receives Jesus. and then it says in Acts 8, “And as they were going along the road they came to some water, and the eunuch said, “See, here is water! What prevents me from being baptized?” And he commanded the chariot to stop, and they both went down into the water, Philip and the eunuch, and he baptized him.”

Often times what holds us back from being baptized is fear, lack of feeling ‘good enough’, or not understanding there is something powerful about baptism for ourselves and in the eyes of others.

We fear because we have to get in front of people. Can’t we deny ourselves just a little to obey Christ who died for us?

We don’t feel ‘good enough’. Baptism isn’t about your maturity, it’s about what Christ did. If you don’t feel good enough, we need to tackle the truth of what repenting and believing means. It means Christ has forgiven you...at the cross. Your sin, past, present, and future sin was dealt with at the cross. His death was once for all...at the cross. He is righteous and you were not. He supernaturally took your unrighteousness and He gave you His righteousness. He made you right before God. You may say, “Ya, but people still see me mess up.” My response, “Great! They will see the true testimony of Christ. Galatians 3:27 says, “And all who have been united with Christ in baptism have put on Christ, like putting on new clothes.” As time goes, they will see the change in you and that is what baptism is...an outward sign revealing there has been, is, and will be change going on in your thinking and therefore in your responses.

One last thing, I have heard this too...I’ll pray about baptism and do it when I feel called by the Lord to do it. You are called by the Lord now. Obedience to God isn’t something you need to feel called to or happens in the future. It is a present reality. We don’t say that to our boss who requires us to get something done. We shouldn’t say that to our parents when they ask us to do something. How much greater is our God than our boss and parents?

Two P.S. comments about baptism. Should babies be baptized? There is no grounding in scripture for this. This comes from, I believe, reading into certain passages where it says, “so-and-so was baptized and their whole family was baptized too.” You have to read into these few verses that there were babies and young children in those families. As well, you would think there would be some verses that come out and mention infant baptism. This is different than a baby dedication. A baby dedication is saying, we as the parents want testify and be accountable to raise up our child with a godly upbringing, pointing them to Christ so that they will have a foundation and understanding to receive Jesus as their savior. It is also saying, it takes a village to raise a kid. It is asking the church to pray for those parents and that child. It is asking the church to play a role in also being a testimony of God’s love to that child through giving that child an opportunity and even resources to hear about Christ.

Second, baptism for the early Christian was not just some thing they did. For the Jewish Christian and even the Gentile Christian, it had a heavy meaning. To testify that they followed Jesus could mean their family shunning them, losing their family inheritance, losing their job or income, even death. They were testifying that Jesus was worth more than anything else and they wanted to be part of that. They were testifying that they now had a heavenly family found in those that also claimed Jesus as their savior.

Communion is also about identifying with Christ.

Listen to Jesus’s words in Matthew 26:26-28 “Now as they were eating, Jesus took bread, and after blessing it broke it and gave it to the disciples, and said, “Take, eat; this is my body.” And he took a cup, and when he had given thanks he gave it to them, saying, “Drink of it, all of you, for this is my blood of the covenant, which is poured out for many for the forgiveness of sins.”

This is another command given by Jesus to those who claim to be disciples of Jesus. It is not ritual or tradition, nor does it bring about salvation, but is a response of surrendering our lives to Jesus in salvation.

So what and why do we take Communion?

It is a time for the church to remember what Jesus did. We remember that He brought about a better promise, a better covenant. Again, Hebrews 8:6 says, ““But now Jesus, our High Priest, has been given a ministry that is

far superior to the old priesthood, for He is the one who mediates for us a far better covenant with God, based on better promises.”

Listen to the context, “And since every high priest is required to offer gifts and sacrifices, our High Priest [who is Jesus] must make an offering, too. If He were here on earth, He would not even be a priest, since there already are priests who offer the gifts required by the law. They serve in a system of worship that is only a copy, a shadow of the real one in heaven.” A shadow of the real one. “But now Jesus, our High Priest, has been given a ministry that is far superior to the old priesthood, for He is the One who mediates for us a far better covenant with God, based on better promises.

If the first covenant had been faultless, there would have been no need for a second covenant to replace it.”

Why wasn't the first, or old covenant faultless? Because the priests had to regularly make sacrifices for their sins and the sins of the people, regularly. It was never good enough to completely do away with their sins, it just covered them up like we do when we brush dirt underneath a rug. The Old Covenant was to point them to and give them understanding of the greatness, power, and completeness of the One who would come and give a sacrifice that was 'once and for all'. It didn't have to be repeated because it didn't just hide our sin, but was good enough and strong enough to actually abolish our sin and as Psalms says, 'cast our sin as far as the east is from the west.'

The framework is that Jesus's sacrifice was enough, there is nothing more to be added. His death and resurrection ushered in the New Covenant.

Communion points to the last plague when the Hebrew people were slaves to Egypt. God had said the firstborn of those who did not smear the Lamb's blood upon the doorpost of each home would die...it was a judgment. Disobedience brought judgment. An innocent lamb had to die in place of the firstborn child. This points to Jesus as the Lamb of God who would take away the sin of the world. With this, the people of God were told to make unleavened bread and to eat a roasted lamb with it. There wasn't time to let the bread rise, this was something that needed to happen now! This lamb that was slain and the unleavened bread would become the Passover feast to commemorate the freedom God brought, the salvation God brought to the Hebrew people from slavery to Egypt and would lead them to the promised land.

Jesus took this passover feast and applied it to Himself and what He was about to do as He and the disciples ate the night before He was killed upon the cross.

In John 6:53-54, after Jesus had fed the 5,000, He said, "I tell you the truth, unless you eat the flesh of the Son of Man and drink his blood, you cannot have eternal life within you. But anyone who eats my flesh and drinks my blood has eternal life, and I will raise that person at the last day."

Later in John 6, it says many left Him because of this saying. They missed what Jesus was saying. It wasn't that they were to be cannibals and eat Jesus. He used imagery a lot to get His point across, to give understanding of who He is and His role. He called Himself the "Good Shepherd", "The Way", "The Door", "the Vine". He wasn't claiming to be a vine.

Jesus also said later in John 6, "I am the bread of life. Whoever comes to me will never go hungry and whoever believes in me will never be thirsty." When we 'eat' of all that He is, it nourishes us, sustains us spiritually. When we eat of Jesus, we are saying we identify with His death on the cross. We receive it, it is now our sustaining power that we will live by.

But what about the cup? The old covenant required blood sacrifices. Blood represents life. To deplete something of its blood was to kill, was to judge its life dead. Sin brought death, eternal separation from God. What would bridge the gap of separation, a blood sacrifice—a life for a life. Jesus was that life that was put in place of ours. The Lamb of God's blood was shed. In the old covenant, the sacrifices as we said earlier only covered over sin. In the new covenant, Jesus blood doesn't cover over sin, but washes it away, because He was a perfect sacrifice. Matthew 26 says, "And He took a cup, and when He had given thanks He gave it to them, saying, "Drink of it, all of you, for this is my blood of the covenant, which is poured out for many for the forgiveness of sins."

In the O.T. covenants were sealed by blood. When two parties made a covenant it was binding because of that blood even if one of the parties did not keep up their end of the bargain. You see this when God makes a covenant with Abraham in Genesis 15. God is faithful to keep His promises. Jesus blood shed was God's new covenant spoken of in Jeremiah 31 which says, "The day is coming," says the Lord, "when I will

make a new covenant with the people of Israel and Judah. This covenant will not be like the one I made with their ancestors when I took them by the hand and brought them out of the land of Egypt. They broke that covenant, though I loved them as a husband loves his wife," says the Lord . "But this is the new covenant I will make with the people of Israel after those days," says the Lord . "I will put my instructions deep within them, and I will write them on their hearts. I will be their God, and they will be my people. And they will not need to teach their neighbors, nor will they need to teach their relatives, saying, 'You should know the Lord .' For everyone, from the least to the greatest, will know me already," says the Lord . "And I will forgive their wickedness, and I will never again remember their sins."

When we eat the bread, we are identifying with Jesus in His death and resurrection. When we drink the cup, we are identifying with the new, eternal life that He gives.

John Piper said,

“The Lord’s Supper is a stark reminder, time after time, that Christianity is not new-age spirituality. It is not getting in touch with your inner being. It is not mysticism. It is rooted in historical facts. Jesus lived. He had a body and a heart that pumped blood and skin that bled. He died publicly on a Roman cross in the place of sinners so that anyone who believes on him might be rescued from the wrath of God. That happened once and for all in history.

Therefore, the mental action of the Lord’s Supper is foundationally remembering. Not imagining. Not dreaming. Not channeling. Not listening. Not going into neutral. It is a conscious directing of the mind back into history to Jesus and what we know about him from the Bible. The Lord’s Supper roots us, time after time, in the nitty-gritty of history. Bread and Cup. Body and blood. Execution and death.”

When should we take communion?

1 Corinthians 11:26 gives us some insight. “For whenever you eat this bread and drink this cup, you proclaim the Lord’s death until He come.” So, part of the answer is until Jesus comes back.

Do we take communion every week, month, quarter or year. Scripture doesn’t seem to give any implicit command. But, it is understood that it was a regular thing.

Who should take communion?

Those who claim Christ as their Lord and Savior. This is not for an unbeliever. They can't identify with what Christ has done and the promises He gives.

How do we take Communion?

According to what Jesus said. However, there is one thing that Paul added to it. And it is a very important statement that we must keep our eye on and heart attuned to: "Whoever, therefore, eats the bread or drinks the cup of the Lord in an unworthy manner [that is, not trusting and treasuring the precious gift of Christ] will be guilty of profaning the body and blood of the Lord. Let a person examine himself, then, [not to see if you are good enough, but to see if you are willing to turn away from yourself trust Jesus for what you need] and so eat of the bread and drink of the cup. For anyone who eats and drinks without discerning the body [that is, without being aware that this bread is not to be treated like a fish sandwich, the way some were doing in Corinth] eats and drinks judgment on himself. [And here is what he means:] That is why many of you are weak and ill, and some have died [not to be sent to hell; the next verse explains]. But if we judged ourselves truly, we would not be judged. But when we are judged by the Lord, we are disciplined [that is, some are weak, and ill, and dying] so that we may not be condemned [that is, go to hell] along with the world.

Here are the words that seem to describe Baptism and Communion:

Identify

Proclaim

Remember

As we worship together by taking communion today, let us remember what we are identifying with. Let us remember what we are proclaiming as we eat this bread and drink this cup.