

The Doctrine of the Church (Baptism and the Lord's Supper)

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[What follows is the transcript of a sermon. It was initially intended to be heard, not read, so the tone is more conversational than academic. It has only been loosely edited, so forgive any grammatical, syntactical, or spelling errors. If you have questions, please contact Pastor Derek at dberry@calvarybaptist.church.

For the past six weeks, we've been considering the doctrine of the local church. In this series, we've defined a local church, its membership, the offices within the church, and how the keys of the kingdom gives a job to every member of the church. This morning we turn our attention to the ordinances, namely Baptism, and the Lord's Supper. As we strive to be a healthy church, having a biblical understanding of each is vital. To be clear, this sermon is only meant to be a primer. Therefore, I won't spend much time dispelling erroneous understandings of each of these ordinances. Some believe we should baptize infants, others that baptism regenerates the soul, and others think we should sprinkle instead of immersing the baptized as a normative practice. Some believe the elements of the Lord's Supper are the body and blood of Jesus, and others believe that Jesus is present uniquely in the bread and wine during the Lord's Supper. Although I don't think the Bible supports any of these teachings, we won't spend much time on these issues other than by allusion when defining Baptism and the Lord's Supper from the Bible.

In order for us to grasp the importance of these ordinances, we need a quick refresher on the keys of the kingdom and the mandate of local churches. We've discussed this ad nauseum at this point, but I've been told that repetition makes something stick. Let's read Matthew 16 and 18.

¹⁵ He said to them, "But who do you say that I am?" ¹⁶ Simon Peter replied, "You are the Christ, the Son of the living God." ¹⁷ And Jesus answered him, "Blessed are you, Simon Bar-Jonah! For flesh and blood has not revealed this to you, but my Father who is in heaven. ¹⁸ And I tell you, you are Peter, and on this rock I will build my church, and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it. ¹⁹ I will give you the keys of the kingdom of heaven, and whatever you bind on earth shall be bound in heaven, and whatever you loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven."
-Matthew 16:15-19

In this passage, we find Jesus providing Peter and the Apostles with a blueprint on how to utilize the keys of the kingdom regarding the binding of members. In Matthew 18, we'll see an example of loosing members. Jesus is looking for a "what" and a "who." Peter, what is your gospel confession? That Jesus is the Christ, the Son of the living God. Jesus affirms this is a proper

confession by making a heavenly pronouncement. Do you see this in verse 17? And then he says he will build his church on “this” rock.” Jesus is clearly referring to Peter here, whose name means rock. The confession can’t be separated from Peter; neither can Peter from his confession. So the point is that Jesus will build his church on the right confessors, those living in light of the gospel, making the right confessions, IE, the gospel. “Here’s the example, Peter; now I’m authorizing you to do the same.” That’s where verse 19 kicks in. Now let’s consider Matthew 18.

¹⁵ “If your brother sins against you, go and tell him his fault, between you and him alone. If he listens to you, you have gained your brother. ¹⁶ But if he does not listen, take one or two others along with you, that every charge may be established by the evidence of two or three witnesses. ¹⁷ If he refuses to listen to them, tell it to the church. And if he refuses to listen even to the church, let him be to you as a Gentile and a tax collector. ¹⁸ Truly, I say to you, whatever you bind on earth shall be bound in heaven, and whatever you loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven. ¹⁹ Again I say to you, if two of you agree on earth about anything they ask, it will be done for them by my Father in heaven. ²⁰ For where two or three are gathered in my name, there am I among them.” -Matthew 18:15-20

Once again we find this language of binding and loosing. Here we discover that local churches have now been authorized to make heavenly pronouncements to the nations on whose in (binding) and whose out (loosing). And churches make these declarations based on the right *who* and *what*. This is much like a judge who pounds a gavel. He doesn’t make the defendant innocent or guilty. He instead looks at the law and evidence and then declares a public verdict. This is the job of the church. We find the definition of a local church in verse 20. A local church is authorized to do more than twenty random Christians who meet at a Chick-fil-A can do.

How exactly does a church employ the keys of the kingdom? Through the ordinances of Baptism and the Lord’s Supper. So these ordinances are tied to the keys of the kingdom, which is why I wanted to begin with a refresher on the gospel of Matthew. Now we’ll spend the rest of our time determining how these ordinances are connected to the keys and how each should be employed biblically.

Let’s start with Baptism. First, I’d like to present a scenario to you. Let’s say you’re swimming with your best friend at Santa Cruz Beach on a nice warm day. Your friend, who is a Christian, comes behind you and dunks you into the water, and then says, “You’ve now been baptized!” I imagine you’d have huge reservations about being surprisingly dunked, counting as a baptism. But here’s my question: what would it take to turn that dunking into a baptism? Similar to the question of what transforms a group of Christians meeting into an official local church, I’m asking what transforms a dunking into water into the ordinance of baptism. We’ll consider this in five points, then summarize with a definition of baptism.

1. Baptism is where faith goes public.

Bobby Jamieson has published a ground-breaking work, *Going Public*, discussing why baptism is required for church membership. I'd highly recommend this book to anyone who desires further study. So, baptism is where faith goes public. We must jettison the idea that becoming a Christian is a private act because it isn't. It is personal in that each individual is called to respond to the gospel by faith and repentance, but it's by no means private. Consider the words of the Lord Jesus.

³² So everyone who acknowledges me before men, I also will acknowledge before my Father who is in heaven, ³³ but whoever denies me before men, I also will deny before my Father who is in heaven. -Matthew 10:32-33

So it is by baptism that this personal faith becomes public, which is absolutely necessary. So, what's publicly symbolized in baptism?

1. Faith and Repentance

³⁷ Now when they heard this they were cut to the heart, and said to Peter and the rest of the apostles, "Brothers, what shall we do?" ³⁸ And Peter said to them, "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. -Acts 2:37-38

Consider the words of G.R. Beasley-Murray, "Baptism is an overt, public act that expresses inward decision and intent; since it is performed in the open, and not in secret, it becomes by nature a confession of faith and allegiance embraced."

As we see in Acts 2, repentance propels one to be baptized because it is a public declaration or a visible embodiment of a person repenting and placing faith in Jesus.

2. A Sign of Forgiveness of Sins

¹⁶ And now why do you wait? Rise and be baptized and wash away your sins, calling on his name.' -Acts 22:16

And this is one of the reasons we should subscribe to full immersion into water for baptism, as it declares the cleansing of sins. Consider what Peter has to say on this matter.

²⁰ because they formerly did not obey, when God's patience waited in the days of Noah, while the ark was being prepared, in which a few, that is, eight persons, were brought safely through water. ²¹ Baptism, which corresponds to this, now saves you, not as a removal of dirt from the body but

as an appeal to God for a good conscience, through the resurrection of Jesus Christ...-1 Peter 3:20-21

Consider his point here. Baptism pictures death because submersion under water kills. So when we are immersed or baptized into the water, this indicates that the person under the water has experienced God's judgment in Christ, yet they're still alive because Christ has raised them from the dead. Therefore, all their sins are washed away.

3. A sign of union in Christ's death, burial, and resurrection

This point links to the last. Consider how this theme dominates the following three passages.

What shall we say then? Are we to continue in sin that grace may abound? ² By no means! How can we who died to sin still live in it? ³ Do you not know that all of us who have been baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into his death? ⁴ We were buried therefore with him by baptism into death, in order that, just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, we too might walk in newness of life. -Romans 6:1-4

²⁵ But now that faith has come, we are no longer under a guardian, ²⁶ for in Christ Jesus you are all sons of God, through faith. ²⁷ For as many of you as were baptized into Christ have put on Christ. -Galatians 3:25-27

¹¹ In him also you were circumcised with a circumcision made without hands, by putting off the body of the flesh, by the circumcision of Christ, ¹² having been buried with him in baptism, in which you were also raised with him through faith in the powerful working of God, who raised him from the dead. -Colossians 2:11-12

What I want you to notice about these texts is the centrality of baptism, uniting an individual to Christ and his work. Here's a quick disclaimer, the Bible clearly teaches salvation by grace through faith alone. This is not in dispute whatsoever. The thief on the cross proves that an individual can enter paradise by faith alone. However, notice that all of these texts don't refer to something that happened *after* we became Christians but speak of what happened to us *when* we became Christians.

Again, we can zoom in and consider someone becoming a Christian apart from baptism by faith alone, and the Bible sometimes does this. And yet, the New Testament tends to keep the lens pulled back by including baptism in becoming a Christian. I like what Bobby Jamison posits,

“In order to align our vocabulary with the New Testament, we shouldn't think of becoming a Christian as merely an invisible, private transaction that is attested after the fact by the visible act

of baptism. Instead, becoming a Christian in a comprehensive, biblical sense involves the public act of baptism.”

Do you see how these passages support this case? Today Christians debate whether or not Paul refers to Spirit baptism in the passages mentioned earlier, particularly the Romans six text. The Apostle would probably be puzzled by such a question and simply state that he’s referring to both. Because during these writings, it was inconceivable for one to be present without the other. Consider what New Testament theologian Robert Stein argues,

“In the New Testament, conversion involves five integrally related components or aspects, all of which took place at the same time, usually on the same day. These five components are repentance, faith, and confession by the individual, regeneration, or the giving of the Holy Spirit of God, and baptism by representatives of the Christian community.”

So Stein suggests that a first-century Christian could have naturally referred to their conversion by mentioning any of them because to mention any is to imply the rest. Remember last week we asked, “What is a Christian?” According to the New Testament, it wouldn’t be wrong to include in this definition one who has entered into the baptismal waters. An excellent parallel example can be found in Romans.

⁹ because, if you confess with your mouth that Jesus is Lord and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved. ¹⁰ For with the heart one believes and is justified, and with the mouth one confesses and is saved. -Romans 10:9-10

Well, Paul already made the point in Romans 4 that justification is by faith alone. Therefore, if a soldier placed faith in the gospel but died via a grenade immediately after and consequently couldn’t confess with his mouth, he would be saved due to his faith. But this verse shows that an outward confession is so normative to the Christian faith that it can be equated as necessary for becoming a Christian.

So our first point of defining baptism is, “It is where faith goes public.”

2. Baptism is the initiating oath sign of the New Covenant.

In Acts 2, we’ve seen that baptism is closely associated with the gift of the Spirit.

⁴ But when the goodness and loving kindness of God our Savior appeared, ⁵ he saved us, not because of works done by us in righteousness, but according to his own mercy, by the washing of regeneration and renewal of the Holy Spirit...-Titus 3:4-5

So, baptism signifies the fulfillment of God’s promises of the New Covenant.

²⁵ I will sprinkle clean water on you, and you shall be clean from all your uncleannesses, and from all your idols I will cleanse you. ²⁶ And I will give you a new heart, and a new spirit I will put within you. And I will remove the heart of stone from your flesh and give you a heart of flesh. ²⁷ And I will put my Spirit within you, and cause you to walk in my statutes and be careful to obey my rules. -Ezekiel 36:25-27

So the granting of the Holy Spirit to God's people demonstrates that this New Covenant has indeed arrived. Therefore, baptism is the visible sign of entering this New Covenant. So in a sense, one has not *fully* entered the New Covenant until they have been baptized. Or we can say an unbaptized believer has entered the New Covenant privately, but not publicly, but the New Testament intends the two to be inseparable.

3. Baptism is the Passport of the Kingdom and a Sign of Church Membership

Remember the embassy example? If your passport expires while traveling in a foreign country, you apply to your country's embassy to have your passport renewed. The embassy has authority you, as an individual citizen, do not have. However, the embassy doesn't *make* you a citizen. It does declare your citizenship to this foreign nation. In like matter, the church does not *make* someone a citizen of Christ's kingdom. However, a local church does what an individual Christian is not authorized to do: declare someone a kingdom citizen.

Baptism is how a church binds you into membership. So it's not only a profession of an individual but also a local church professing that this confessor has the proper confession. Consider Matthew 28 with chapters 16 and 18 as the backdrop.

¹⁸ And Jesus came and said to them, "All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. ¹⁹ 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... -Matthew 28:18-19

The idea of Jesus's authority and heaven should bring to mind the heavenly authority granted to local churches. So, the Great Commission is not as much a mandate on individual Christians as it is for local churches. And this is the keys to the kingdom connection of binding that baptism has. We'll consider how the Lord's Supper plays a significant role in loosing momentarily. This point implies that churches should be slow to baptize young children. This is not a declaration that God cannot save five-year-olds with Christian parents. However, the goal of the local church is to determine whether or not a young person has grasped the gospel and made the faith their own apart from their parents. And unfortunately, Baptists have been known for practicing what I consider more dangerous than paedobaptism. At least with infant baptism, in the reformed tradition, everyone acknowledges that this child isn't saved, but they're merely outwardly connected to the covenant people of God. According to our understanding of Baptism, we would provide a child with a false security that they know the Lord when they may not.

4. Baptism is a necessary Criterion by which a Church recognizes a Christian

In other words, Baptism is necessary for church membership. Pay close attention here. Jesus has bound the institutional church's judgment of one's confession to baptism. So even if all the individual Christians in a local church were to believe an individual is a Christian, if he/she remains unbaptized, the local gathered church hasn't been authorized to bind this individual into membership. Remember, Jesus has delegated authority to the local church as a body that he hasn't given to you or me as individual Christians. This includes individuals who were dunked as infants. This is why a paedo-Baptist who was only dunked as a baby couldn't be a member of this church because they were never baptized.

I'll conclude this section with a helpful definition by Bobby Jamieson of baptism.

“Baptism is a church's act of affirming and portraying a believer's union with Christ by immersing him or her in water, and a believer's act of publicly committing him or herself to Christ and his people, thereby uniting a believer to the church and marking off him or her from the world.”

Hopefully, after the points we touched on, this definition will make perfect sense. Now to our second point, the Lord's Supper, or communion. What is it, and how does it fit into the keys of the kingdom?

1. The Lord's Supper is a communal participation in Christ through partaking of bread and wine.

¹⁶ The cup of blessing that we bless, is it not a participation in the blood of Christ? The bread that we break, is it not a participation in the body of Christ? -1 Corinthians 10:16

The Greek word for participation here means “sharing in something with someone.” We're sharing with one another; what we're sharing is fellowship with Christ. As we feed and drink with our mouths, we feed on Christ with our hearts by faith. And the Lord's Supper was typically celebrated in the context of a meal, hence why I think it'll be fruitful for us to recover this practice.[1] We proclaim and commemorate the Lord's death every time we partake of the Lord's Supper; therefore, it seems this should be a regular pattern for the church.

²⁶ For as often as you eat this bread and drink the cup, you proclaim the Lord's death until he comes. -1 Corinthians 11:26

The New Testament suggests that the local churches partook of this meal every Sunday. The evidence is inconclusive; however, the Scriptures seem to suggest this. Again, if this is what we do when we partake of the Lord's Supper, the more, the merrier!

2. The Lord's Supper is what makes many one.

¹⁷ Because there is one bread, we who are many are one body, for we all partake of the one bread. -1 Corinthians 10:17

I like what Oliver O'Donovan has to say about this. "The effectiveness of this sign should not be looked for in a "sacramental grace" which affects the believer in a different way from other kinds of grace, but in the *formation of the church*. The "one loaf" binds "many" into "one body." It determines the identity of this society by reference to the Passion: it is the community of those who have not only gathered to God's Christ, but have died with him."

So based on this text, in a sense, a local church doesn't officially become a local church until the members participate in the Lord's Supper with one another. It's what consummates their union. Similar to marriage. A marriage is official at the point of consummation, and the continual coming together celebrates that oneness. Such is the case with the local church with communion.

3. The Lord's Supper is the Renewing Oath-Sign of the New Covenant

So, the Lord's supper is a renewing or ratifying sign of the New Covenant. Jesus linked communion with the New Covenant when he instituted it at the last Passover with his disciples.

¹⁴ And when the hour came, he reclined at table, and the apostles with him. ¹⁵ And he said to them, "I have earnestly desired to eat this Passover with you before I suffer. ¹⁶ For I tell you I will not eat it^[b] until it is fulfilled in the kingdom of God." ¹⁷ And he took a cup, and when he had given thanks he said, "Take this, and divide it among yourselves. ¹⁸ For I tell you that from now on I will not drink of the fruit of the vine until the kingdom of God comes." ¹⁹ And he took bread, and when he had given thanks, he broke it and gave it to them, saying, "This is my body, which is given for you. Do this in remembrance of me." ²⁰ And likewise the cup after they had eaten, saying, "This cup that is poured out for you is the new covenant in my blood. -Luke 22:14-20

So we continue to profess our faith in Christ by partaking in the bread and wine representing his body and blood, thereby communicating our commitment to his covenant as surely as if we spoke a verbal oath. In the words of Jonathan Edwards, "Tis with significant signs as it is with words: words are a profession of the thing signified by those words; so significant actions are a profession of the thing signified by those actions." So we're proclaiming what was done for us, as well as continually pledging our allegiance, which all highlights the New Covenant that's been established. Therefore, only those who have participation in the New Covenant should partake of communion.

Here's another helpful definition by Bobby Jamieson of communion. "The Lord's Supper is a church's act of communing with Christ and each other and of commemorating Christ's death by partaking of bread and wine, and a believer's act of receiving Christ's benefits and renewing his or her commitment to Christ and his people, thereby making the church one body and marking it off from the world."

If all this is true, who should partake of the Lord's Supper? Those who have fully entered the New Covenant through belief and baptism and have been bound to a local church. So, we'll briefly consider this in three parts, believer, baptized, and church members.

The Lord's Supper is for those who have responded to the gospel through faith and repentance. Because of what the Lord's Supper signifies, only believers share in this union with Christ. Secondly, it is for believers who have been baptized. We see an Old Testament parallel for this truth. The Passover defined the shape of the covenant community of Israel, and circumcision initiated one's membership into the covenant. And the continual Passover marked ongoing participation in the covenant. Consider Exodus 12.

⁴⁸ If a stranger shall sojourn with you and would keep the Passover to the LORD, let all his males be circumcised. Then he may come near and keep it; he shall be as a native of the land. But no uncircumcised person shall eat of it. -Exodus 12:48

A prerequisite for the covenant-keeping meal was that the sojourner must first be circumcised. And so it is with baptism and the Lord's Supper in the new covenant. Thirdly, it's for those who are members of local churches. Recall the communal aspect of the Lord's Supper. This isn't meant to be an individual ordinance but rather one that is tied to the keys of the kingdom within a local church. Therefore, since the Lord's Supper binds many into one, the "many" must be individuals covenanted with a gospel-preaching local church. This truth is seen in the fact that ex-communication involves revoking one's right to the Lord's Table.

In closing, the primary takeaway from this message will vary depending on your circumstance. If you've yet to respond to the gospel by repentance and faith, please do so today. Perhaps you've responded to the gospel and have yet to go into the baptismal waters; prayerfully, God's Word convicts you to do just that. Or maybe you've yet to submit to a local church with authority to announce to the nations that you belong to Jesus by employing the keys. If not, this should be your primary concern. Or perhaps you've done all this and just needed a firmer grasp on these two ordinances that you partake of the Lord's Supper. In any of these cases, God calls you to respond to his Word obediently.

Let's pray.

[1] 1 Cor 11:20-22, Possible Acts 2:42; 20:7, Jude 12