

Christian Doctrine The Church (Part 4) Church Ordinances

Two Ordinances of the Church

One ordinance given to the church is baptism. Baptism is part of the Great Commission (Matt. 28:19).

- Purpose of baptism: The purpose of baptism is to identify someone with something (i.e. Holy Spirit baptism identifies believers with the Body of Christ). Christian baptism identifies people with the Gospel of Christ. It serves as a public testimony that a person is identified with Christ in His death, burial and resurrection. It gives the picture of one who has “buried” their old life and “arisen” to new life in Christ (Rom. 6:3-5; Col. 2:12).
- How it should be done: The word “baptize” come from the Greek term “baptizo,” meaning “to dip or immerse.” From Christ’s example (Mark 1:10), through the early believers (Acts 8:38-39; Mark 1:5; John 3:23), baptism was done by completely immersing the individual in water.
- When it should be done: Baptism is a first step of obedience after salvation (Acts 2:41; 8:12; 10:47-48; 16:14-15).

The other ordinance is the Lord’s Supper. Speaking of the Lord’s Supper, Jesus said, “Do this in remembrance of Me” (Luke 22:14-20).

- The Lord’s Supper serves several purposes (I Cor. 11:23-26):
 - To remember the work of Christ (v. 24-25)
 - To proclaim the Lord’s death/gospel message (v. 26)
 - To anticipate Christ’s return (v. 26)
 - To enjoy unity and fellowship with other believers (v. 20)
- How it should be done: The believer takes the bread and the cup (which symbolize the body and blood of Christ) in a time of reflection on the work of Christ on their behalf.
- When it should be done: Scripture does not say how often it should be done, but does indicate that it should be done on a regular basis. It is intended for members of a church (believers) who have first examined themselves to be sure there is no unconfessed sin in their life (I Cor. 11:27-30).

*It is important to note that each ordinance has an important purpose. However, neither can “earn” salvation. Salvation is a gift which comes solely through faith in Christ (Eph. 2:8-9).

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