

Arbor Foundations
13 – Baptism and Lord’s Supper
Dec 16, 2018 – John Raquet

Key Ideas / Biblical Basis

From 1689 London Baptist Confession of Faith (in modern English), Chapter 28:

1. Baptism and the Lord’s Supper are ordinances of positive and sovereign institution. They are appointed by the Lord Jesus the only lawgiver and are to be continued in his church to the end of the age.

Both baptism and the Lord’s Supper are what we call “ordinances”—they are things that Jesus has commanded the church to do.

Baptism: *Matt 28:19-20: 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, teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you. And behold, I am with you always, to the end of the age.*”

Lord’s Supper: *1 Cor 11:23-25: 23 For I received from the Lord what I also delivered to you, that the Lord Jesus on the night when 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." In the same way also he took the cup, after supper, saying, "This cup is the new covenant in my blood. Do this, as often as you drink it, in remembrance of me."*

We will cover each of these separately.

Baptism

We will consider three questions.

Question 1: What is baptism?

- A. Something commanded by Jesus and the apostles
 - Matt 28:19-20 (see above)
 - *Acts 2:38: 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.*

- B. Signifies our union with Christ
 - *Rom 6:3-5: 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. 5 For if we have been united with him in a death like his, we shall certainly be united with him in a resurrection like his.

- C. Signifies our union with other believers as well as with Christ
- *Gal 3:26-28: 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. 28 There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free, there is no male and female, for you are all one in Christ Jesus.*
- D. Signifies spiritual life within the person being baptized
- When you see baptism being mentioned in the Bible, it is never by itself, in a vacuum. Closely tied with baptism are various indicators of spiritual life, including repentance from sin, belief in the teaching of the apostles, and faith in Christ.
 - i. **Repentance** from sin
 - *Acts 2:37-39: 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. 39 For the promise is for you and for your children and for all who are far off, everyone whom the Lord our God calls to himself."*
 - ii. **Belief** in the teaching of the apostles
 - *Acts 20:40-42: And with many other words he bore witness and continued to exhort them, saying, "Save yourselves from this crooked generation." 41 So those who received his word were baptized, and there were added that day about three thousand souls. 42 And they devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching and the fellowship, to the breaking of bread and the prayers.*
 - iii. **Faith** in Christ
 - *Col 2:12: 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.*
 - All three of these things—repentance, belief in the teachings of the apostles (Scripture), and faith in Christ go together. These are the reality of which baptism is the symbol.
- E. Signifies entry into the new testament covenant community—the church
- Baptism is a public identification with Christ, and represents entry into the group of those who are united with Christ—the church. The pattern of Scripture is that when people come to saving faith, they

are baptized and become part of the church. Baptism and church membership are very closely connected. Since it signifies entry into the church, it makes sense that the church elders would be involved in the administration of baptism.

- F. It is NOT a requirement for salvation.
- Baptism is something that we are commanded to do if we are believers, but it is not necessary for salvation.
 - i. Sometimes people who believe that it is necessary for salvation point to Mark 16:16: *Whoever believes and is baptized will be saved, but whoever does not believe will be condemned.* However, this verse actually doesn’t say anything about those who believe and are not baptized.
 - ii. The thief on the cross is an example of someone not baptized but saved.

Question 2: Who should be baptized?

We hold to what is called “believers’ baptism. As stated in the 1689 London Baptist Confession (in modern English):

Chap 29, Paragraph 2. Those who personally profess repentance toward God and faith in and obedience to our Lord Jesus Christ are the only proper subjects of this ordinance.

Here are the reasons that we believe that only those who have professed faith in Christ should be baptized:

1. The new testament narrative passages on baptism suggest that baptism was administered only to those who gave a believable profession of faith
 - Mark 16:16: *Whoever believes and is baptized will be saved, but whoever does not believe will be condemned.*
 - Acts 2:41: (on day of Pentecost): *So those who received his word were baptized, and there were added that day about three thousand souls.*
 - Acts 8:12: *But when they believed Philip as he preached good news about the kingdom of God and the name of Jesus Christ, they were baptized, both men and women.*

- But what about the “household baptisms”, when entire households were baptized at the same time? Doesn’t that imply that infants would have been baptized?
 - In just about every “household baptism”, there is explicit evidence of the household hearing and responding to the gospel (including some household conversions where baptism isn’t mentioned, but a whole household was converted):
 - Phillipian jailer Acts 16:31-33: *And they said, "Believe in the Lord Jesus, and you will be saved, you and your household." 32 And they spoke the word of the Lord to him and to all who were in his house. 33 And he took them the same hour of the night and washed their wounds; and he was baptized at once, he and all his family. 34 Then he brought them up into his house and set food before them. And he rejoiced along with his entire household that he had believed in God.*
 - Household of Stephanas—1 Cor 1:16a: (Paul) *I did baptize also the household of Stephanas.* But later in the same letter we hear about the conversion of this household: 1 Cor 16:15: *Now I urge you, brothers—you know that the household of Stephanas were the first converts in Achaia, and that they have devoted themselves to the service of the saints*
 - Entire household coming to faith: John 4:53: *The father knew that was the hour when Jesus had said to him, "Your son will live." And he himself believed, and all his household.*
 - Another household coming to faith: Acts 18:8 *Crispus, the ruler of the synagogue, believed in the Lord, together with his entire household. And many of the Corinthians hearing Paul believed and were baptized.*
 - Only example of household baptism where there isn’t an explicit indication of household faith: Acts 16:14-15: *One who heard us was a woman named Lydia, from the city of Thyatira, a seller of purple goods, who was a worshiper of God. The Lord opened her heart to pay attention to what was said by Paul. And after she was baptized, and her household as well, she urged us, saying, "If you have judged me to be faithful to the Lord, come to my house and stay." And she prevailed upon us. This text is ambiguous about whether there were unbelieving infants in the household or not. If we were to follow the pattern seen in all of the other household baptisms, we would guess that her household came to faith, but that isn’t explicitly stated, so it is also ambiguous in this sense. Given the ambiguity, this*

verse is inconclusive in terms of whether it’s an example of infants being baptized.

2. The New Testament writers clearly assumed that everyone who was baptized had also personally trusted in Christ and experienced salvation (Grudem). Examples:
 - Gal 3:27: For as many of you as were baptized into Christ have put on Christ.
 - Rom 6:3-6: *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. 5 For if we have been united with him in a death like his, we shall certainly be united with him in a resurrection like his. 6 We know that our old self was crucified with him in order that the body of sin might be brought to nothing, so that we would no longer be enslaved to sin.*
 - Col 2:12: *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.*
 - These verses make no sense if the writers are not talking about believers who have already put their faith in Christ.

3. The nature of the New Covenant requires that only believers be baptized.
 - a. Sometimes, a parallel is drawn between circumcision, which was the sign indicating entry into the covenant community in the Old Testament, and baptism, which is the sign indicating entry into the covenant community in the New Covenant. I believe that this parallel is completely valid, but that we need to understand the differences between the old covenant and the new covenant in order to properly apply the sign of the covenant.

b. Consider the following contrasts:

Old Covenant	New Covenant
Physical temple	Spiritual temple made out of believers (1 Pet 2:5)
Physical sacrifices offered in worship	Spiritual sacrifices offered in worship (1 Pet 2:5, Heb 13:15-16)
Received physical land of Israel	A better, heavenly country (Heb 11:16)
Made up of physical descendants of Abraham	Made up of spiritual descendants of Abraham (Gal 3:29, Rom 4:11-12)
Faith not an entrance requirement to be in the covenant community (Gen 17:10-13)	Every member of the covenant community knows God (Jer 31:31-34, c.f. Heb 8:8-13)
Circumcision signifies entry into the Old Covenant community	Baptism signifies entry into the New Covenant community
Who: Consists of believers and unbelievers	Who: Consists of believers only (one reason it’s a superior covenant, according to Jer 31:33-34)

c. Based on this understanding of the nature of the New Covenant, it makes sense to baptize those who show evidence of faith in order to be consistent with how God characterizes the nature of the New Covenant.

Question 3: What is the proper mode of baptism?

We believe that the proper mode of baptism is to dip the person in water, because that most clearly represents our identification with Christ in his burial and resurrection.

Concluding Note: While we believe that believers’ baptism is what is intended by the Biblical authors (and therefore by God), we have many brothers and sisters in Christ who disagree and who baptize their infants, based on their understanding of the relationship between the old and new covenants. We tend to have strong inter-church fellowship with these believers, who do not consider baptism to actually save their children (as we don’t).

Lord’s Supper

Unlike baptism, which happens once to a believer, normally upon entry into a church, the Lord’s Supper is something that happens often and repeatedly. It is intended by god to be a “means of grace” in the life of a believer. (By “means of grace”, we mean means by which the Holy Spirit works to convey blessings into the life of a believer.)

The Lord’s Supper has many interrelated meanings which can be a great encouragement to the believer. Some of these are (following Grudem):

1. **Christ’s death.** Paul explicitly relates the bread to Christ’s body which was broken for us and the cup to Christ’s blood which was shed for us. Additionally, when we participate in a proclamation of Christ’s death. (1 Cor 11:23-26).
2. **Our participation in the benefits of Christ’s death.** When we partake, we are symbolizing that we are taking the benefits of Christ’s death for ourselves (which is the essence of faith in Christ).
3. **Spiritual nourishment.** The Lord’s table is a picture of us obtaining spiritual nourishment from Christ (just like we obtain physical nourishment from food).
4. **The unity of believers.** We participate in the Lord’s table together, not in isolation. As such, it serves as a sign of demonstration of our unity (1 Cor 10:17). Note that this is a contrast to baptism, in which the sign is being applied to only one person at a time, while the others observe. With the Lord’s table, we all participate at (approximately) the same time.
5. **Christ affirms his love for me.** The fact that Jesus invites me to come to the Lord’s table reminds me that Christ loves me individually and personally.
6. **Christ affirms that all the blessings of salvation are reserved for me.** This is a foretaste of the great marriage supper of the lamb to come (Rev 19:9). By welcoming me to his table, Christ affirms that I am a member of his eternal family.
7. **I affirm my faith in Christ.** By participating, I am in effect proclaiming my faith in Christ, saying that I really do need him, and that my sins were part of why he went to the cross to die.

Here’s an excerpt from the 1689 LBC (modern English) that summarizes the above concepts:

LBC Chap 30, paragraph 1: The supper of the Lord Jesus was instituted by him the same night he was betrayed. It is to be observed in his churches to the end of the age as a perpetual remembrance and display of the sacrifice of himself in his death. It is given for the confirmation of the faith of believers in all the benefits of Christ’s death, their spiritual nourishment and growth in him, and their further engagement in and to all the duties they owe him. The supper is to be a bond and pledge of their communion with Christ and each other.

We believe that the bread and the cup are symbols representing the spiritual reality of Christ’s presence

Who should participate?

Since this is an ordinance given by Christ to the church, it should only be given to those who have been joined to the church.

In our church, we welcome those who are baptized believers and members of other churches to join us in the Lord’s Table.

However, what is meant by “eating in an unworthy manner”? We read in 1 Cor 11:27-34:

*27 Whoever, therefore, eats the bread or drinks the cup of the Lord in an unworthy manner will be guilty concerning the body and blood of the Lord.
28 Let a person examine himself, then, and so eat of the bread and drink of the cup.
29 For anyone who eats and drinks without discerning the body eats and drinks judgment on himself.
30 That is why many of you are weak and ill, and some have died.
31 But if we judged ourselves truly, we would not be judged.
32 But when we are judged by the Lord, we are disciplined so that we may not be condemned along with the world.
33 So then, my brothers, when you come together to eat, wait for one another—
34 if anyone is hungry, let him eat at home—so that when you come together it will not be for judgment. About the other things I will give directions when I come.*

A key phrase here is in v. 29, where Paul says “without discerning the body”, and in context, this seems to mean that they were eating it selfishly, without discerning that nature of the church as one body. We should take thought to all of the relationships within the body when we partake of the Lord’s supper. Do they reflect the reality of us being one body in Christ? Jesus teaching about coming to worship in general likely comes into play here as well:

Matt 5:23-24: So if you are offering your gift at the altar and there remember that your brother has something against you, 24 leave your gift there before the altar and go. First be reconciled to your brother, and then come and offer your gift.

So, what does “eating in an unworthy manner” mean? It does NOT mean that we come to the Lord’s table as unworthy sinners, because in a sense that is the whole point. I believe that it is referring to either than we come representing ourselves as believers (part of the body of Christ) when we are not, or perhaps having such large inconsistencies between how we are relating to one another as the body of Christ and what is reflected in the Lord’s table, that it is really disingenuous to partake.

So What?

What is the personal benefit of consciously being aware of the meaning of both baptism and the Lord’s table?

What would we be missing out on if we were to completely neglect baptism?
What would we be missing out on if we were to completely neglect the Lord’s table?

For Further Study

1689 London Baptist Confession of Faith

Grudem, *Systematic Theology*.