

The Baptist Examiner

A nation-wide, independent paper, standing foursquare for the distinguishing doctrines of Baptists, and shunning not to declare all the counsel of God.

"To the law and to the testimony if they speak not according to this word, it is because there is no light in them" (Isa. 3:20).

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The Memorial Supper of Our Lord

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That which Paul says of the institution and design of the Lord's Supper is, in substance, the same which the evangelists have recorded. These are his words: "I have received of the Lord that which I also delivered unto you, that the Lord Jesus the same night in which he was betrayed took bread: and when he had given thanks, he brake it, and said, Take, eat, this is my body, which is broken for you; this do in remembrance of me. After the same manner also took the cup, when he had supped, saying, This cup is the new testament in my blood; this do in remembrance of me. For as often as ye eat this bread, and drink this cup, ye do show forth the Lord's death till he come" (1 Cor. 11:23-26).

In this Scripture Paul has expressed the Baptist position on the Lord's Supper, which we shall try to bring out in our discussion. We shall discuss our subject from the following points: 1. What is the ordinance? 2. Why observe the ordinance? 3. Who can properly observe the ordinance? 4. How observe the ordinance?

What The Ordinance Is

We begin first by saying what the elements in the supper are NOT. **The bread is not the literal body and the "cup" is not the literal blood of our Lord.** In speaking of these Jesus used symbolic language as he did in many other instances. In John 10:17 he said: "I am the DOOR of the SHEEP." Surely he did not mean that he was a literal door that could be hung on hinges and that his followers were literal sheep that could be sheared and their wool sold. Jesus meant that the bread REPRESENTED his body and the "cup" his blood.

The bread is bread when it is baked at the home of the deacon, bread when it is brought to the Lord's table, bread when the ministering servant asks God's blessings upon it, bread AFTER the blessing is asked, and bread as it is eaten by the solemn followers of Jesus as their Lord. The same is true of the wine. It remains wine all through the service.

We are to understand these as SYMBOLS and SYMBOLS only. If we fail to realize this, we lose the meaning of the Master's words when he said: "IN REMEMBRANCE OF ME."

We well remember that Jesus said: "I am the bread of life." This bread in the ordinance represents him as the "TRUE BREAD FROM HEAVEN."

As we die to sin once, we are baptized once as a symbol of our death to sin, our burial, and our resurrection to walk in newness of life. We partake of the memorial supper as symbolic of our constant need of spiritual life in him, therefore we partake of it often. The supper also shows forth the Lord's death till he come.

This ordinance should fill the Christian with mingled sorrow and joy—sorrow as we think of his sufferings, JOY AS WE THINK OF THE REASON FOR HIS DEATH. He died as our substitute! **Thanks be unto God for his unspeakable gift!**

Why Observe the Memorial Supper?

We come now to consider the question that is often raised

by some. If the ordinance has no saving power or grace, what is the use of observing it? This question is easily answered from the word of God.

The first reason, and we think the greatest one, is that Jesus commanded us to do it in remembrance of him. A child of God who does not wish to carry out his commands is a very disobedient child. We are well-pleasing to God when we do the things he commands us. Jesus was our example in this.

We are not to observe this ordinance in order to be saved. Partaking of it presuppose that we are saved, for we are supposed to be in his church to which he gave the ordinance.

The second reason for observing the Lord's Supper is to show forth his death. Only the Christian can really do this, for his death means nothing to the sinner.

The death of Christ was a sacrificial death. He was the "Lamb slain from the foundation of the world." His was not the death of a martyr. It was substitutionary. He died the death that the sinner should have died. He became the object of divine vengeance. And the sufferings of Christ were not all physical. "He shall see of the travail of his SOUL and shall be satisfied" (Isa. 53:11). The soul agonies of Christ far exceeded his physical agonies.

The third reason for observing this ordinance is that it points to Christ's second coming, for which all his followers should be looking with eager hearts. "Till I come" is a great expression signifying that the Lord's Supper is to be observed by the churches until they see him come in like manner as he went away.

In the fourth place we suggest that the Lord's Supper ought to be observed because of the impression it may make upon those outside. When we observe this ordinance we are showing the Lord's death, which is the thing that is necessary to the sinner's salvation. When we observe the Supper we are indirectly declaring to the world that we are believers in Christ as our Savior.

Who Can Properly Observe the Ordinance?

This is a much disputed point between Baptists and those of other faiths, and even between Baptists themselves; but it is hard to see why so much controversy has arisen over so plain a teaching.

First, the Lord's Supper is not a family ordinance, but a church ordinance. It is not to be observed by those who regard fleshly ties as entering into the observance of it. It is not a communion with parents, brothers, sisters, and other relatives, nor with one's friends. Some regard the Supper as a social meal, and call Baptists selfish because they do not invite their friends to eat with them. Hence the term "close communion." The communion should be close between the individual and God.

Second, only those of one, particular, local Scriptural church should observe the Supper together. It is not a denominational ordinance, but a church ordinance. 1 Cor. 10:17 teaches that the "one body" should partake of the "one bread." If we invite the members of other Baptist churches, then we ought