

Baptism and the Lord's Supper

By Todd Pruitt

Jesus gave to His church two ordinances: baptism and the Lord's Supper. We believe that baptism is for believers in Jesus Christ. It is symbolic of dying to our old sinful nature and being raised to a new life in Jesus (Romans 6:3-4). Therefore, we practice believer's baptism. That is, we are convinced that baptism is an ordinance reserved for those who believe upon the Lord Jesus Christ and thereby can give proper testimony to being raised to new life.

Our practice of baptism is by immersion. We do this for two reasons. First, the Greek word for baptism literally means to immerse or submerge. Secondly, since baptism points to a dying to sin and rising to new life it is most appropriately symbolized through immersion into water and being brought back up. This does not suggest that all other modes of baptism are illegitimate. Rather, immersion seems to be the most faithful representation of what baptism symbolizes.

The second ordinance of the church is the Lord's Supper.

There are several words that help us to understand the purpose of the Lord's Supper.

- **Remembrance** – “Do this in remembrance of Me” (I Corinthians 11:24). The Lord's Supper is a recognition that in Christ God became man and entered into this physical world at a particular moment in history. Jesus was not the pure spirit of the Gnostic imagination. He was a real man with flesh and blood who experienced happiness and pain, friendship and abandonment. While Jesus lived He truly lived. When He died He truly died. The Lord's Supper gives proper remembrance to the physical and historical reality of Jesus.
- **Proclamation** – When we receive the Lord's Supper we “proclaim the Lord's death until He comes” (I Corinthians 11:26). The Lord's Supper is a proclamation which takes place through the visible signs of bread and cup. The bread, representing the Lord's body and the wine, representing the Lord's blood both testify to Jesus' sacrificial death in the place of sinners. This is one reason why the Lord's Supper is not to be practiced as a private devotional experience. It is a community conditioned activity whereby the physical signs give tangible and public witness to the Gospel of Jesus Christ.
- **Communion** – The word “communion” comes from a word that means “to have in common” or “to share.” This reminds us that the Lord's Supper is to be something that we share in the company of our brothers and sisters in Christ. It also recognizes that in the Lord's Supper Jesus invites us to join Him in table fellowship. The Lord's Supper is not a sacrifice made upon an altar it is fellowship or communion at the Lord's table.