

BAPTISM AND THE LORD'S SUPPER

Growing up, my brother and I were the youngest cousins by almost a decade. We had cousins who were married with children before we'd lost all of our baby teeth. So at family reunions or holidays, we sometimes felt left out. The adults sat at the big table, while my brother and I were consigned to the kids' table. It was just me, my brother, and our cousin, Jimmy.

Jimmy was closest to us in age, at sixteen, while others were in their thirties. And until he was an adult, he had to sit at the kids' table too. But he didn't pout. Jimmy colored with us; chatted with us; and when dinner was over, he'd wrestle with us in the living room. One year, he imparted upon us the greatest knowledge of all—*how to catch toads*.

He took us out to my great aunt's pond with flashlights and dark clothes and told us to stay still so that the toads wouldn't see us. He taught us to listen for the toads' croaks. Finally, we heard one. Jimmy gestured for us to surround the little toad, then close in from all sides. At the last moment, the toad leaped into the air, but Jimmy caught it and placed it in my brother's bucket. We rushed back to the house and presented our toad to the adults, who *ooohed* and *ahhed*.

It's been years now, but I'll never forget how Jimmy included us. Catching toads with him made us feel like family.

1 What are some shenanigans you were involved in as a kid?

2 Do you have any memories of someone stepping up to include you?

3 What are ways that your church invites participation?

¹³ Then cometh Jesus from Galilee to Jordan unto John, to be baptized of him.

¹⁴ But John forbad him, saying, I have need to be baptized of thee, and comest thou to me?

¹⁵ And Jesus answering said unto him, Suffer it to be so now: for thus it becometh us to fulfil all righteousness. Then he suffered him.

¹⁶ And Jesus, when he was baptized, went up straightway out of the water: and, lo, the heavens were opened unto him, and he saw the Spirit of God descending like a dove, and lighting upon him: ¹⁷ And lo a voice from heaven, saying, This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased.

...

¹⁹ Go ye therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost: ²⁰ Teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you: and, lo, I am with you always, even unto the end of the world. Amen.

¹³ Then Jesus came from Galilee to the Jordan to be baptized by John.

¹⁴ But John tried to deter him, saying, "I need to be baptized by you, and do you come to me?"

¹⁵ Jesus replied, "Let it be so now; it is proper for us to do this to fulfill all righteousness." Then John consented.

¹⁶ As soon as Jesus was baptized, he went up out of the water. At that moment heaven was opened, and he saw the Spirit of God descending like a dove and alighting on him. ¹⁷ And a voice from heaven said, "This is my Son, whom I love; with him I am well pleased."

...

¹⁹ "Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, ²⁰ and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you. And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age."

Jesus' Baptism

In Matthew 3:13, Jesus comes to be baptized by John alongside those confessing their sins (see Matt. 3:5–6). Jesus identifies with the repentant crowd, even though He Himself is without sin (see 1 Peter 2:22; Isa. 53:9). His request for baptism even surprises John, who knows that Jesus has greater power. John had told those gathered that one coming after him would baptize with the Holy Spirit and fire, not just water (Matt. 3:11).

In Matthew 3:14, John recognizes Jesus and objects, saying that Jesus should baptize *him* instead. But Jesus is firm, saying, "Let it

be so now; it is proper for us to do this to fulfill all righteousness” (Matt. 3:15). “Righteousness” here means faithful obedience to God’s will. Jesus is doing what is right and good by identifying with the needy crowd of people, for whom He has come to live and to die.

John consents to baptizing Jesus. And the response from heaven reveals Jesus’ identity as the Son of God, the Messiah. The Holy Spirit descends like a dove and rests on Jesus (Matt. 3:16), recalling Isaiah’s words that the Spirit shall empower the Messiah (Isa. 11:2; 42:1; 61:1). At the same time, God’s voice from heaven says, “This is my Son, whom I love; with him I am well pleased” (Matt. 3:17). The words of the Father reflect Psalm 2:7, addressing the Davidic king who shall inherit the nations. As in Isaiah 42:1, the heavenly Father delights in this chosen one.

If we skip all the way to the end of the Gospel, after Jesus’ resurrection, He commissions His followers to go and make disciples of all nations, expanding the mission beyond Israel (Matt. 28:19; compare Matt. 10:5–6). And part of this disciple-making process involves baptizing “in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit” (Matt. 28:19).

Therefore, baptism identifies God’s people with Jesus. It invites them to enter the life of faith, joining with Christ in His life, death, and resurrection. It marks people who live under the banner of God’s holy name. And in Matthew 28:20, Jesus reveals that another part of the disciple-making process includes teaching His commandments. Jesus assures His followers that, as they take up this mission, He is always with them, to the very end—living up to the name Immanuel, “God with us” (Matt. 1:23).

1 Why did Jesus come to be baptized?

2 What does heaven’s response to Jesus’ baptism reveal?

3 What role does baptism play in the disciple-making process?

²³ For I have received of the Lord that which also I delivered unto you, that the Lord Jesus the same night in which he was betrayed took bread: ²⁴ 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. ²⁵ After the same manner also he took the cup, when he had supped, saying, this cup is the new testament in my blood: this do ye, as oft as ye drink it, in remembrance of me. ²⁶ For as often as ye eat this bread, and drink this cup, ye do shew the Lord's death till he come.

²⁷ Wherefore whosoever shall eat this bread, and drink this cup of the Lord, unworthily, shall be guilty of the body and blood of the Lord. ²⁸ But let a man examine himself, and so let him eat of that bread, and drink of that cup. ²⁹ For he that eateth and drinketh unworthily, eateth and drinketh damnation to himself, not discerning the Lord's body.

²³ For I received from the Lord what I also passed on to you: The Lord Jesus, on the night he was betrayed, took bread, ²⁴ 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." ²⁵ In the same way, after supper he took the cup, saying, "This cup is the new covenant in my blood; do this, whenever you drink it, in remembrance of me." ²⁶ For whenever you eat this bread and drink this cup, you proclaim the Lord's death until he comes.

²⁷ So then, whoever eats the bread or drinks the cup of the Lord in an unworthy manner will be guilty of sinning against the body and blood of the Lord. ²⁸ Everyone ought to examine themselves before they eat of the bread and drink from the cup. ²⁹ For those who eat and drink without discerning the body of Christ eat and drink judgment on themselves.

The Lord's Supper

The church in Corinth was making a mockery of the Lord's Supper by using it as an opportunity for gluttony and drunkenness, to the harm of the poor in the community (see 1 Cor. 11:17–22). Paul writes to correct this misconduct and remind the church of the meaning of this shared meal. Beginning in 1 Corinthians 11:23, Paul teaches what he received from Jesus, who began the Lord's Supper on the same night that He was betrayed and arrested. The Lord's Supper—also called *Communion*—illustrates the sacrifice of Jesus' body and blood, which was willingly given for the good of others. Paul is

passing on the oral tradition of Jesus' words, which found in Luke's Gospel (Luke 22:19–20).

The breaking and eating of bread is a reminder of Jesus and His *body* given for us (1 Cor. 11:24). Likewise, the drinking of the cup is a reminder of Jesus and His *blood* shed for us. His words, passed on by Paul, say, "This cup is the new covenant in my blood" (1 Cor. 11:25). The new covenant fulfills the promises to God's people, given through the prophets. With the new covenant comes forgiveness of sins, the giving of God's Spirit, and the changing of hearts (see Jer. 31:31–34; Ezek. 36:26–28). Christ's sacrificial death makes all of these a reality. Thus, followers of Jesus participate in the Lord's Supper to remember what Jesus has accomplished: to "proclaim [Jesus'] death, until he comes" (1 Cor. 11:26). Sharing in the Lord's Supper is a witness to the world that *the sacrifice of Jesus matters*.

But Paul warns those who abuse the Lord's Supper not to sin against the body and blood of Christ (1 Cor. 11:27). Eating and drinking in an "unworthy manner" includes the situation described in verses 17–22: using the Supper as an opportunity for extravagant feasting, thus excluding the poor and missing the entire point. Paul encourages believers to examine themselves before participating, to avoid judgment and discipline from God (1 Cor 11:28–29, 32). This requires considering motives and conduct before "discerning the body of Christ" (1 Cor. 11:29, a phrase referring to the "body" of believers in attendance. When we share the Lord's Supper, we should be looking to the good of others in our community, and it certainly shouldn't be a way to flex any special status.

1 What does the Lord's Supper help us to remember?

2 How does participating in the Lord's Supper proclaim the Lord's death?

3 How were the Corinthian Christians eating and drinking in an unworthy manner?

God's Story and Mine

I sometimes feel removed from the stories of Scripture, as if I am viewing a great mountain from a far distance. I can make out the shape and scale, but I can't quite comprehend its splendor or what it's like to live in its shadow. That must belong to someone else.

Maybe it's because the stories of the Bible happened long ago: creation, covenants, cross. All are great stories, but not my story. Maybe they belong to someone else. *Jesus died for all those people*, I think, *how wonderful!* But what about me?

How quick I am to forget that, when I read the story of Scripture, I'm reading a "story" that invites me into the center. The grace of God has brought me near, and I'm a citizen of His forever kingdom—a child of His forever family. I don't just stand on the outside as an observer!

Whenever I have trouble believing this, it helps to fix my eyes on Jesus—His life, death, and resurrection. Baptism and Communion help me do this. These practices are like arrows on a map, pointing back to the mountain. Baptism and Communion point us back to Christ, back to a real invitation to be with Jesus.

When I remember my own baptism—in my case, standing on a cinder block in a baptismal pool, as a child coming of age—it reminds me that I'm a part of something new and wonderful, God's new creation and God's kingdom people, a community of faith that persists throughout the ages. And when I come to the Lord's Table alongside brothers and sisters in Christ, I remember that Jesus made it all possible for each of us. His body and blood are given freely. Now Jesus' story is my story—His death, my death and His life, my life—and the story is true!

1 Do you ever have trouble believing that you are a part of God's story?

2 What happens to followers of Jesus when they fix their gaze on the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus?

3 Share how Communion or baptism—yours or someone else's—has strengthened your faith.

Journaling about Baptism

The invitation is to reflect on the image of baptism, either Jesus' baptism or your baptism in Him. If you have been baptized, you might start by writing about where and when, perhaps what you remember about the experience. If you've not been baptized, you might consider speaking to a leader of your church to find out more information.

Jesus, Your life, death, and resurrection are a true story for me to share.

Key Text

Go ye therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost: Teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you: and, lo, I am with you always, even unto the end of the world. Amen.

— Matthew 28:19–20 KJV

“Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you. And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age.”

— Matthew 28:19–20 NIV

Quiet Hour® and Cross Daily Bible Readings

Week of February 9 through February 14

Mon. Genesis 1:31–2:4—God Rests on the Seventh Day.

Tue. Hebrews 4:1–11—The Promise of Entering God's Rest.

Wed. Isaiah 58:8–14—Delight in the Sabbath.

Thu. Matthew 12:1–8—Jesus Is Lord of the Sabbath.

Fri. Matthew 28:1–10—The Day of Resurrection.

Sat. Exodus 20:1, 8–11—Keep the Sabbath Day Holy.

Next Week: Exodus 20:8–11; Romans 14:4–6; Revelation 1:10

We will return to talk about another important practice: coming together for worship. Do you have any particular habits that make your Sabbath or Sunday special?