

WHY BAPTISTS BELIEVE WHAT BAPTISTS BELIEVE, PART 35

I want you to notice the two examples that Jesus gave us to follow, which we Baptists practice.

[Question 21] Jesus was **baptized** at the BEGINNING of His earthly ministry as an example to His followers. We read that in Matthew 3:13-17 last time. Jesus was identifying Himself with the sinful humanity He came to save. This is the example He wants us to follow.

Then He instituted the **Lord's Supper** toward the END of His ministry, the last night He was with His disciples, so that we would remember His sacrifice for us. He said, "Do this in remembrance of Me."

So, you have baptism at the beginning of His ministry - example - and the Lord's Supper at the end of His ministry - remembrance.

THE LORD'S SUPPER

The Baptist Faith and Message says this about the Lord's Supper under the heading "Baptism and the Lord's Supper": "The Lord's Supper is a symbolic act of obedience whereby members of the church, through partaking of the bread and the fruit of the vine, memorialize the death of the Redeemer and anticipate His second coming." For Baptists the "fruit of the vine" is grape juice. Other denominations will have wine.

The following passage from Matthew Chapter 26 is the Passover meal, what some people call the "Last Supper."

"Now as they were eating, Jesus took bread, and after blessing it broke it and gave it to the disciples, and said, 'Take, eat; this is My body.'" [Note: this is obviously not his literal body

because He is still standing there. He hasn't gone to the cross yet. He didn't cut off a piece of His flesh and hand it to His disciples]. "And He took a cup, and when He had given thanks, He gave it to them, saying, 'Drink of it, all of you, for this is My blood of the covenant, which is poured out for many for the forgiveness of sins' [note: obviously it wasn't His literal blood because He didn't put His blood into the cup; it was probably wine]. "I tell you I will not drink again of this fruit of the vine until that day when I drink it new with you in My Father's kingdom'" (Matthew 26:26-29).

[Question 22] Based on this passage Baptists believe that the bread represents Christ's **body** and that it was broken (killed) for our sins. The cup of wine (the "fruit of the vine") is a picture of Christ's **blood**, spilled on our behalf. They are representative. They don't actually become the body and blood of Jesus. Baptist don't believe that. As the Baptist Faith and Message says, this is "a symbolic act of obedience" that we do as a corporate body so that we will remember what Jesus did for us on the cross.

[Question 23] Who first coined the term, "Lord's Supper"? Was it Jesus, Peter, Paul, Luke or Pope Gregory? It was **Paul**. In 1 Corinthians 11:20 he said, "When you come together, it is not the Lord's supper that you eat." Paul is admonishing the Corinthian believers who had made a travesty of the Lord's Supper by getting drunk on the wine. They were not doing right.

[Question 24] The Lord's Supper, sometimes referred to as communion, is only to be taken by **believers in Jesus**. In 1 Corinthians 11, in his discussion of the Lord's Supper, Paul states: "When you come together as a church..." (1 Corinthians 11:18). He then proceeds to lay out instructions for observing the Lord's Supper. So clearly, it's intended to be taken by the church, which is made up of believers in Jesus.

Paul goes on to teach that there is a spiritual significance found in observing the Lord's Supper. "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. Let a person examine himself [or herself], then, and so eat of the bread and drink of the cup" (1 Corinthians 11:27-28).

[Question 25] What are we believers urged to do before we take the Lord's Supper? Paul urges us to **examine ourselves** prior to taking it.

To clarify what is meant by "examining ourselves" let's look at the next question. This is a case study involving the Lord's Supper.

[Question 26] You are at church on a Sunday evening and that night the congregation observes the Lord's Supper. While in a spirit of prayer, the Holy Spirit convicts you of a sin that is in your life, what should you do? **Confess that sin to God.** In the privacy of your own heart, you repent of and confess your sins to God. Remember what 1 John 1:9 says: "If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness." If we are sincere, God does that. Then we can eat the Lord's Supper in a worthy manner. We will not have any unconfessed sins in our life.

[Question 27] How often are we directed in Scripture to observe the Lord's Supper? The Bible does **not give any direction** as to how often we are to observe the Lord's Supper. It only says that we should. Some denominations observe communion every time they meet. Most Baptist churches observe the Lord's Supper (including our own) about once every three months. Some may only do it once a year. Baptists see the Lord's Supper as having great spiritual significance and therefore it IS important. However, we prefer not to partake of it too often lest it become merely a routine religious act. So it is good that we do it periodically, but not every week.