**Two Ordinances – Part One**

**BAPTISM | LORD’S SUPPER**

**INTRODUCTION:**

The next Baptist Distinctive we will consider is that of the two ordinances of the New Testament church: baptism and the Lord’s Supper. Speaking of the church, Paul admonishes in *I Corinthians 14:40, “Let all things be done decently and in order.”*  Today there is a sad lack of both decency and order in the ordinances as practiced by many Baptists. The right practice of the ordinances is important to the scriptural status of the church. Especially in the case of baptism, the church only retains its scriptural identity so long as it rightly practices the ordinance. Baptism is the life blood of true identity. It is very important that we have scriptural convictions concerning these ordinances of the church.

1. **THE ORDINANCES OF THE CHURCH** 
   1. **Definition of the word.**
2. The word “ordinance” is derived from the Latin and signifies that which is ordered or commanded. An ordinance is an authoritative order or decree.
3. In Christian usage, it refers to a divinely instituted rite which conveys truth through its symbolism.
   1. **This term is used to describe the two ordinances, baptism and the Lord’s Supper, which Christ left to the churches to be observed until He returns.** 
      1. How we observe them determines whether they are scriptural ordinances, or whether they are merely rituals and traditions of men.
      2. In many instances, the ordinances have been so modified by man as to no longer conform to the biblical command and example. When this happens, they cease to be ordinances.
      3. The Bible states very clearly what God’s will is in these ordinances.
         1. H.G. Weston wrote: “In studying the New Testament account of the church, we find, besides moral duties, certain acts commanded by its Founder, significant of certain truths enjoined on the members of the church. Such acts are called ordinances.”
         2. “An ordinance is an outward institution, appointed by Christ, by positive precept, to be observed by all His people to the end of the age, commemorating an essential gospel fact and declaring an essential gospel truth. Of these there are two, Baptism and the Communion—the initiation and consummation of the Christian life. These ordinances are the gospel in symbol: they commemorate, declare, and typically embody the whole Christian system (*I Corinthians 15:1-5*). They are the true symbols of Christianity, divinely appointed and all-sufficient.” – The Constitution and Polity of the New Testament Church, pp. 27-28, in E.H. Johnson’s Outline of Systematic Theology.
4. **THE BIBLE TEACHES THERE ARE TWO ORDINANCES** 
   1. **The origin of the two ordinances of baptism and the Lord’s Supper.**
      1. Scriptural Baptists through the ages have held that there are two, and only two, ordinances which were committed to the churches, and that the practice of these is obligatory upon the churches.
      2. They were not developed over the centuries, nor did the apostles or the early church institute them. They were given by the Lord Himself.
      3. J.M. Pendleton: “He [Christ] is the only Institutor of ordinances. Apostles had no discretion in the matter. They could only teach the baptized disciples ‘to observe all things’ commanded by Christ. His will was to them, as to His followers now, the supreme law. It was optional with Him to institute many ordinances or few. It was His pleasure to appoint only two, namely baptism and the Lord’s Supper. These appointments of Christ are the church ordinances in the sense that they pertain to His churches—not to the world; and are committed to the care of His churches, whom He holds responsible for their preservation in their original purity and integrity.”
   2. **There are those today who practice foot-washing as a third ordinance.**
      1. They take as their authority for it *John 13:14, “If I then, your Lord and Master, have washed your feet; ye also ought to wash one another’s feet.”*
      2. Foot-washing was common in the East in the First Century, being an act of hospitality to guests. Because most travel was by foot over dusty roads, the washing of the feet at the end of the journey was a necessary thing and common courtesy demanded that failing to provide it for a guest was considered both rude and disrespectful. The washing, when performed by other than the traveler himself, was generally done by a servant of the house where the traveler lodged. For the host himself to do this was considered an act of great humility and showed immense respect for the traveler.
      3. *Luke 7:36-44* shows that foot-washing was common practice before that which is recorded in *John 13:14*. No one would claim this as a church ordinance; it merely teaches the same thing as that in *John 13*, namely humility and the love of one person for another. Foot-washing was not associated with religious service in any way, and after the mention of it in *John 13*, it is not again mentioned in the New Testament except in *I Timothy 5:10*—again, clearly not as a church ordinance, but rather an act of courtesy and love by one individual to another. Neither is foot-washing a visible symbol of the saving truth of the gospel.
      4. Christ’s words to His disciples on this occasion, show that it was no ritual which they were to do, but rather it was an attitude which was to characterize their lives as His disciples. *John 13:1-17*
         1. The admonition in *John 13:14* was given to a bunch of proud, bickering Baptists who had forgotten what humility was! Each one considered himself above the menial task of washing the other’s feet.
         2. In just a short time, they would argue about who among them should be accounted the greatest. *Luke 22:24-27*
         3. It remained, therefore, for the Lord to take the place of a servant and to set the example of humble service for them. He gave no ordinance. He gave them “an example.” An example of what? Of humble service! Or self-denying service! Of Christ-like service!
5. **THREE LOGICAL REQUIREMENTS FOR AN ORDINANCE** 
   1. **It must be instituted in the Gospels.** 
      1. Baptism - John was baptizing in Matthew 3:1-17, and our Lord submitted Himself to baptism. In *John 4:1-2*, we find that Jesus baptized more disciples than John the Baptist did (although Jesus did not actually do the baptizing but authorized His disciples to do it).
      2. Lord’s Supper - The story of Jesus instituting the Lord’s Supper the night before He was crucified is found in all four Gospels. *Matthew 26:26-30; Mark 14:22-26; Luke 22:17-20; John 13*
      3. There is no doubt that this ordinance was instituted in the Gospels.
   2. **It must be practiced in Acts.**
      1. Baptism - *Acts 2:41, 8:12,37-38, 9:18, 10:48, 16:17, 33*  In each case, the individual was baptized almost immediately after salvation, and in every case, the baptism was by immersion.
      2. Lord’s Supper - *Acts 2:42, 20:7* and *I Corinthians 10:16* refer to “the breaking of bread.” The Lord’s Supper is never represented in the Bible as being partaken by anyone except those saved and baptized, and that partaking was in their own church.
   3. **It must be instructed upon in the Epistles.** 
      1. Baptism - *Romans 6:3-4; Colossians 2:11-13.* In both cases, baptism symbolized our death, burial, and resurrection with Christ and indicates that we desire to walk in newness of life. *I Peter 3:21* instructs us that baptism does not wash away our sins but is the answer of a good conscience. It helps to confirm in our hearts the decision we made to trust Christ as our Savior.
      2. Lord’s Supper - *I Corinthians 11:23-19* is the clearest instruction we have on the Lord’s Supper.

**CONCLUSION:**

There are biblical reasons why we hold to two ordinances—baptism and the Lord’s Supper. It is important for us to follow them correctly with decency and order.