

**Fundamentals, Study 28. Baptism And The Lord's Supper (Heb 8:6-13)**

by BS Poh

o Baptism and the Lord's Supper are special ordinances given to the local church as signs of the new covenant.

1. Baptism and the Lord's Supper are two *special ordinances* instituted by the Lord Jesus in His church, to be continued to the end of the world.<sup>1</sup> Like hearing the word and prayer, they are *means of grace*, i.e. outward and ordinary means by which Christ communicates the benefits of salvation to believers. However, unlike hearing the word and prayer, they are *signs* of the new covenant as well. In other words, each of the special ordinances not only has a *purpose*, but also a *meaning*. As visible and outward signs, they represent inward and spiritual realities. Baptism is the sign of *union* with Christ, and the Lord's Supper is the sign of the believers' *fellowship* together in Christ's death. Under normal circumstances, a person should be baptised before taking part in the Lord's Supper.<sup>2</sup> (1. Matt 28:19-20; 26:26-29; 1 Cor 10:16-17; 11:26; 2. Matthew 28:19-20; Acts 2:41-42)

2. These special ordinances are to be administered in the local church, by those who are qualified and called to be ministers of the gospel.<sup>3</sup> Since these are church ordinances, it is wrong to administer them outside the context of the local church. Under exceptional circumstances, other men in the church may be delegated to carry out the baptism or the Lord's Supper, but the *responsibility* of doing so lies with the ministers of the gospel.<sup>4</sup> Four matters relating to the special ordinances must be considered: the *meaning*, the *purpose*, the *subject*, and the *mode* (i.e. the method). Error in any of these will affect the gospel, the purity of the church, and fellowship between churches, to various degrees. (3. Matt 28:19; 1 Cor. 4:1; 4. John 4:2.)

3. The Roman Catholic Church refers to baptism and the Lord's Supper (which it calls the *holy eucharist* or *mass*) as *sacraments*, or means of salvation. For that reason, we are reluctant to use the word "sacraments" in reference to the means of grace. It is claimed that there are five other sacraments, including *confirmation* (a ceremony for baptised infants who have come of age), *penance* (confession of sins to a priest), *extreme unction* (the anointing with oil of those who are dying), *holy orders* (becoming a monk or nun), and *marriage*. The Roman Catholic Church also errs seriously by claiming that Christ is crucified afresh, under the appearances of bread and wine, each time the mass is celebrated. Furthermore, it is claimed that the elements change into the actual flesh and blood of Christ when taken - a belief called *transubstantiation*.

4. If it is a serious matter to err on the Lord's Supper, it is also a serious matter to err on baptism. Paedobaptist churches (including the Roman Catholic, Lutheran, Presbyterian, Anglican, and Methodist Churches) err by baptising babies, who are not yet capable of faith. Since baptism is a sign of union with Christ, it is to be administered only to believers, which is what the Bible teaches. 5 The purpose of baptism is to initiate the subject into the membership of the local church.<sup>6</sup> By baptising babies, paedobaptists introduce into the membership of the church many who grow up to be unbelievers. The purity of the church is thus compromised. When converted later, the new believer is denied baptism because he is supposed to have been baptised already. Biblical baptism is

therefore denied to him. Instead, an unbiblical practice, called *confirmation*, is performed on him. Furthermore, paedobaptists are wrong by admitting sprinkling as a mode, if not *the* mode, of baptism. There is only one baptism commanded by the Lord, which is the baptism of believers by immersion.<sup>7</sup> (5. Mark 16:16; Acts 2:38; 6. 1 Cor 12:12-14; Acts 2:41; 7. Rom 6:3-4; Eph 4:5)

= Repent and believe first. Then get baptised and be joined to the church.

### Review Questions

1. What are the two *special ordinances* of the local church?
2. What is meant by *the means of grace*?
3. Of what is baptism a sign?
4. Of what is the Lord's Supper a sign?
5. Who should rightly administer the special ordinances?
6. What four matters relating to the special ordinances must be considered?
7. Why are we reluctant to use the word *sacraments* in reference to these means of grace?
8. What serious error is made by the Roman Catholic Church in regard to the meaning of the Lord's Supper?
9. State three errors on baptism committed by paedobaptist churches.
10. What is the one baptism commanded by the Lord?

### Assignment/Discussion

The special ordinances are given to the local church. How would the meaning and purpose of each ordinance be affected if carried out by para-church organisations or individual Christians?

### Memory Passage (1 Cor 12:12-14)

12 For as the body is one and has many members, but all the members of that one body, being many, are one body, so also is Christ. 13 For by one Spirit we were all baptized into one body—whether Jews or Greeks, whether slaves or free—and have all been made to drink into one Spirit. 14 For in fact the body is not one member but many.

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