

Baptism and the Lord's Supper

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Ivan Raskino was a professional Marine Engineer and Naval Architect when he first gave his heart to our Lord Jesus at age 40. Five years later, he felt the Lord calling him to start a church among the oppressed of Mumbai. Accordingly, he left his job and began preaching on Mumbai streets for many years.

He and his wife, Melanie, started the Valley of Praise Fellowship in their residence, which later expanded to other churches in different locations in Mumbai. The Lord showed Ivan the keys to ministering to people from hurting and challenging backgrounds. Ivan taught in many churches in India, Japan and the UK, finding that strongholds were broken and hundreds of people were powerfully set free and baptised with the Holy Spirit. Ivan also acted as Prayer Coordinator in Mumbai City from 1995-2005 and led in worship with his wife, Melanie, in many inter-church gatherings in Mumbai.

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Ivan was born in 1942. Ivan and Melanie have been married since 1970. They have four children and four grandchildren.

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Introduction

The Gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ never fails to fill my heart with awe. In perfect unity with the Father and the Holy Spirit, the Son of God, the Creator of the universe, chose to become a man in Jesus Christ. He lived the life we should have lived, took our sins and curses upon Himself, and died the death we should have died, but He rose again after three days. He transferred His righteousness to our account with accompanying blessings. He did all this because He loves us.

My reverence for Jesus Christ extends to the two sacred rites He commanded us to observe—Baptism and the Lord's Supper. These are not mere rituals. The gospel is acted out in them. The gospel's transformative power can turn the worst sinner's heart and behaviour into an obedient child of God Most High. I believe these two Christian rites hold immense power. I eagerly anticipate a time when the presence and power of God will manifest mightily in these rites as we participate with faith, humility, unity, and a heart to honour God.

Despite persecution, the gospel is moving rapidly in India among all castes and classes of people. Praise God! However, I've noticed that many new Christians are adopting unfamiliar practices. While I believe this is a new work of God with a new wineskin, I think it's essential to establish some foundational principles. Furthermore, many traditional Christians have lost the vitality of these two fundamental Christian rites. Therefore, I wrote this book on Baptism and the Lord's Supper with a sense of urgency and a deep commitment to reviving their observance.

While I respect the various interpretations of the Scriptures by different branches of Christianity, I am drawn to **our shared goal of honouring the Son** by discussing these rites and looking into their roots in the Old and New Testaments. This shared goal unites us and brings us closer to the Lord, as Pastor Lou Engle, a man of God whom Christians recognise as a General amongst intercessors, also believes. I share his vision of a Communion Revival that could strengthen our connection with the Lord and each other.

In Church history, Christian leaders called these rites in different terms. They first used the Greek term "Mysterion" (mystery). It was a convenient term used in the New Testament (Rom 16:25-26, Eph 3:3-13, Col 1:24-27) to refer to matters that God once hid but now has revealed through the gospel. The early church applied the same term "Mysterion" to these Christian rites, considering

them to reveal a mystery of divine grace. But later, they thought the word 'mysterion' could mislead people to believe that Christianity was about the same as certain mystery religions that were fashionable during those days. So, they began to use the Latin term "Sacramentum" (sacrament) instead of the Greek 'mysterion'. The early church father, Augustine of Hippo (354-430 AD), a highly respected theologian by all branches of Christianity, viewed sacraments as **"an outward and visible sign of an inward and invisible grace"**. The church considers these rites as sacred signs designed by God to indicate a divine reality.

While diverse, Christianity is united in recognising two sacraments — Baptism and the Lord's Supper. However, each branch — Catholic, Orthodox, and Protestant — has a unique understanding and practice of sacraments.

Roman Catholics embrace a broad spectrum with seven sacraments: Baptism, the Lord's Supper, Confirmation, Confession, Matrimony, Holy Orders, and Extreme Unction (anointing the sick).

The Orthodox Church also embraces the seven Roman Catholic sacraments and recognises many other sacraments, such as blessing, service, prayer, song, and others, that render God's presence tangible.

In contrast, Protestants acknowledge only two sacraments — Baptism and the Lord's Supper. They believe them to be the only two rites our Lord Jesus specifically instituted, and the Church must observe. He commanded baptism in Matt 28:19 and the Lord's Supper in Matt 26:26-28.

The Baptists, started by John Smyth in 1609, were the first to prefer using the term **"ordinance"** instead of "sacrament" because they believed that Baptism and the Lord's Supper were purely symbolic acts of obedience rather than a means of grace. They followed the Anabaptist belief of believer's baptism and rejected infant baptism. (Anabaptist means re-baptism)

Other Protestant leaders retain the term "sacraments" for these two rites. However, **the term sacrament or ordinance does not matter today. What matters is our understanding, reverence, and our faith in the gospel it signifies.**

Acknowledgement: In writing this book, I have drawn much from Dr Tim Chester's "Truth We Can Touch: How Baptism and Communion Shape Our Lives" (Logos Bible Study) and from the Essays by scholars on The Gospel Coalition website.

Notes:

In this book, I will use the term "sacraments" to refer to the Christian rites of Baptism and the Lord's Supper.

Pentecostals and Charismatic denominations distinguish between Baptism in water and Baptism of the Holy Spirit. Yet they agree that baptism in water is the sacrament (ordinance) of the Church —called "baptism." So, when I use the word "baptism" in this book, I refer to baptism in water.

Some denominations refer to the Lord's Supper as the Breaking of Bread, Communion, or Eucharist, which are all valid terms. In this book, I will use the term Lord's Supper to mean the same rite to maintain consistency and clarity for all readers, especially as this book may be translated into different Indian languages.

The **Last Supper** in the Gospels is the final Passover meal our Lord Jesus shared with His apostles in Jerusalem before His crucifixion. It provides the scriptural basis of what we call today the sacrament of the **Lord's Supper**.

In the Protestant Reformation, started by Martin Luther in 1521, the two main reforms concerned justification by faith alone and the supremacy of scripture alone— but a close third reform concerned the sacraments.

The Roman Catholic position is that sacraments become effective due to words spoken by the priest, irrespective of the faith of those receiving them. The Protestant position is that the faith of the person receiving the sacraments is essential. **I believe in the Protestant position.**

I will state the various Catholic and Protestant views on Baptism and the Lord's Supper in Appendix 1-5.

1. God's Judgment and Water

Introduction

Some of the great themes in the Bible are the holiness of God and the fall of man into utter depravity — causing God to pass judgment because He is just. And yet God redeems man because God is love. As the Holy Spirit reveals these themes to us starting from *Genesis*, we see the glory and grace of God gradually being revealed throughout the Old Testament, culminating in the face of Jesus Christ in the New Testament. Jesus is the hero and champion of redemption history whom God revealed in the fullness of time (*Gal 4:4, Eph 1:10*).

God gradually reveals glimpses or **types** of the Messiah in the Old Testament through persons, events and God-ordained institutions. Through these types, God reveals to His people an increasingly better understanding of the life and mission of the coming Messiah that eventually finds fulfilment in Jesus Christ. One such type of event repeated in the Old Testament corresponds to baptism by water. Although not mentioned in the Old Testament, baptism was practised from ancient times in the Old Testament. In this chapter, we shall see the glorious fulfilment of its significance in Jesus' baptism by John the Baptist and what it means to us in our baptism.

The apostle Peter said concerning Noah and the ark. *1 Pet 3:20 to those who were disobedient long ago when God waited patiently in the days of Noah while the ark was being built. In it, only a few people, eight in all, were saved through water*

Outline

1. Noah
2. Moses
3. Joshua
4. Jesus

1. Noah (*Gen 6-9*)

Genesis 6:5 says, "The LORD saw that the wickedness of man was great in the earth and that every intention of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually."

This verdict on man's utter depravity is obvious — every intention of his heart is only evil continually. The Apostle Paul agrees. He says, "*There is nothing good in me*" (Rom 7:18)

God's response to sin is judgment! A holy God will respond to evil with judgment. He must do so—otherwise, He would not be just and holy. And God cannot deny Himself.

In the story of Noah, we see God's judgment by water. God releases the flood waters to wipe out humanity. Symbolically, God *un-creates* the world that He created in Gen 1, where He separated the waters to create dry land and brought order from chaos. At the flood during Noah's time (Gen 6), the waters recombine to cover the land, and chaos returns. The resulting chaos drowns sinful humanity in the waters of judgment.

But God is also loving and gracious, creating a new future for humanity. God saves Noah and his family from the waters of judgment in the ark. Then God sends a wind (Gen 8:1). The Hebrew word for "wind" is the same as the word used for "Spirit." Just as the Spirit hovered over the waters at creation (Gen 1:2), one may say that God again sent His Spirit, separating the waters to create dry land in Noah's case. We may also say that humanity and the earth are reborn or re-created out of the waters of judgment.

The waters of that ancient flood in Noah's time (Gen 6-9) symbolise God's judgment throughout the Bible.

Noah's flood waters are the first mentioned of all the baptismal types that follow. The judgment was severe, as the waters engulfed the whole earth, saved the human race from extinction, and set the pattern of salvation through judgment and redemption. But Noah's ark only saved seven people besides himself. Therefore, while it may seem the most prominent of all baptismal types, it is the weakest.

2. Moses (Exodus 14)

Moses undergoes two baptisms. The first is when he's thrown into the River Nile (a place of death for newly born Hebrew male children) and rescued miraculously by Pharaoh's daughter (Exodus 2). Moses' mother placed her baby in a basket, actually called an "ark" in Hebrew, a deliberate linguistic connection to the story of Noah's ark. The second baptism is when God uses Moses to rescue His people from slavery in Egypt under Pharaoh through the Red Sea parting.

In Exodus 14, The Israelites are sandwiched between the pursuing Egyptian army and the Red Sea. There is no escape from death. But God sends a wind (same Hebrew word as Spirit) that separates the Red Sea waters to create dry land for the Israelites to pass through.

Exodus 14:21-22 The LORD drove the sea back with a strong east wind and turned it into dry land. The waters were divided,²² and the Israelites went through the sea on dry ground, with a wall of water on their right and their left.

God's people escape from death through water. But when the Egyptian army follows them, the waters fold back, and the Egyptians are drowned. Just like sinful humanity in Noah's time, God judges Egypt with water and, at the same time, saves His people **through** water.

In redemptive history, Moses's baptism is more significant than Noah's. Moses' baptism saved the whole nation of Israel, whereas Noah's baptism saved only a few family members.

3. Joshua (Joshua 3-4)

Forty years later, Joshua, Moses' successor, brings a new generation of Israelites to the edge of the Promised Land. Yet, between them and the Promised Land is the Jordan River "at flood stage" (Joshua 3:15). But at God's command, as soon as the Israelite priests, who with the Ark of the Covenant, touch the river, the waters upstream stopped flowing and piled up "in a heap a great distance away" (Joshua 3:16), and "Israel crossed the Jordan on dry ground" (Joshua 4:22). Joshua says, "For the LORD your God dried up the Jordan before you until you had crossed over. The LORD your God did to the Jordan what he had done to the Red Sea when he dried it up before us until we had crossed over." (Joshua 4:23). God's people, the Israelites, are brought into the promised land **through** water.

Moses successfully released the Israelites from bondage in Egypt but failed to lead them into the Promised Land. Moses' successor, Joshua, completed the task, and the Israelites were again saved **through** the waters.

4. Jesus

About 1500 years later, we read John the Baptist baptising people— "proclaiming a baptism of repentance for the forgiveness of sins" (Mark 1:4). At that time, Gentiles were baptised to join God's people. They had not been with the Israelites who passed through the waters of the Red Sea with Moses or the Jordan River

with Joshua. So, the practice was that they had to pass symbolically through the baptismal waters to join God's people (along with the other requirements of circumcision and the sprinkling of the blood of a lamb). But now John is baptising Jews and tells them they are wicked and face God's judgment, like Gentiles. They need forgiveness.

Then Jesus steps forward from the crowd. Here is the Son of God, who, together with the Father and the Holy Spirit, is the Creator of the universe. Here is Jesus, the Word made flesh. He is perfect, sinless, pure, and righteous. He doesn't need to repent or seek forgiveness.

And yet Jesus steps into the water — the water that symbolises the wrath of God's judgment on our sin. Jesus identifies with us, with our sin, our wickedness, our utter depravity. Then, as John the Baptist immerses Jesus in the Jordan River, the waters of judgment **symbolically** engulf Jesus. All those stories from the Old Testament of Noah, Moses, and Joshua were just shadows and types that allowed us to understand **this** moment. In His baptism, Jesus identifies with sinful humanity and intends to take the judgment we deserve. By this baptism, Jesus declares to all humanity, "I'm with you." He becomes one with sinful humanity.

As soon as Jesus came out of the water, the Holy Spirit descended on Him, and the Father spoke from heaven, "*You are my beloved Son; with you I am well pleased.*" (Mark 1:10-11). Notice that, once again, the Spirit is involved. God the Spirit descends on God the Son, and God the Father speaks from heaven. The Holy Trinity is united in affirming this act of identification through baptism.

Like Moses, Jesus experienced two baptisms. At the beginning of his ministry, John first baptised Jesus (Mark 1). And like Moses' first baptism, Jesus' first baptism wasn't for the salvation of His people. In Jesus' case, it was to identify Him with sinful humanity whom He was about to lead on a new exodus from slavery to sin (John 8:34, Rom 6:6).

Jesus' second baptism was on the cross. The disciples, James and John, asked Jesus to sit on the left and right of His side when He came in glory. In Mark 10:38, Jesus said to them, "*You will drink the cup I drink and be baptised with the baptism I am baptised with.*" Jesus was referring to His death on the cross, where He will drink on our behalf the cup of God's wrath (Jer 25:15-38). The cup of cursing (judgment) is filled with our sin and will be drained by Christ

on the cross so that the cup of blessing (redemption) is filled with Christ's merits and drunk by us at the Lord's Supper. And Jesus will be baptised with God's judgment on our behalf.

Jesus was symbolically baptised into our sins by John the Baptist. But on the cross, He is fully baptised into our sins, immersed in them. He dies and is buried. He bears our judgment in full. And on the third day, He rises again to give us new life.

- Like Noah's ark, Jesus's cross will become a refuge for all who seek rest in Him.
- Like Moses's staff, which God used to part the Red Sea, Jesus will be lifted to deliver His people from the power of sin and death.
- Like the Israelite priests in the Jordan River during Joshua's time, Jesus will insert himself into the river of God's wrath.

But in the case of Noah, Moses, and Joshua, baptism is physical, not spiritual, since no one can accomplish what Jesus alone could and did. In Jesus's case, since His sacrifice is offered with His blood, His death and resurrection have the power to ensure that His gospel will reach humanity in every corner of the earth and to procure forgiveness for all those who believe in Him. He will save the whole family of faith from the floodwaters of God's wrath. Notice the progression of saving grace starting with one family (Noah) to one nation (Israel) to all nations (after Pentecost).

When you or I stand on the edge of the baptismal waters and step in, we are baptised like Noah, Moses, Joshua, and Jesus. We declare our faith in Jesus' death and resurrection and pass through the waters of God's wrath into new life. Our baptism is acting out our faith in the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ.

2. Baptism — Sign and a Seal of Salvation

Outline

1. Saved through water and not by water
2. Does Baptism save you
3. Baptism as a sign and a seal
4. Baptism is a command of Jesus

1. Saved through water and not by water

*1 Peter 3:20-21 ... Long ago, God waited patiently in the days of Noah while the ark was being built. In it, only a few people, eight in all, were saved **through** water,²¹ and this water symbolises baptism that now saves you also—not the removal of dirt from the body but the pledge of a clear conscience toward God. It saves you by the resurrection of Jesus Christ.*

In **verse 20**, Peter says Noah was “saved **through** water.” Noah certainly wasn’t saved by the waters of the flood—quite the opposite. The water threatened him, but the ark saved him from the water. So God kept Noah safe. He passed **through** the waters of judgment in the ark to a new life.

In **verse 21**, Peter says that this water symbolises baptism **through** water, by which we are saved.” We pass through the water, symbolising judgment, and emerge to a new life. It symbolises a clear break from your old life that deserves judgment from God (but Jesus took it) to a new life filled with hope in Jesus Christ.

The word “symbolises” is used for Noah’s flood waters, a type or pattern fulfilled by baptism. Peter implies that God has worked throughout history according to a pattern. The stories of Noah, Moses, and Joshua all took place to prepare us to understand the deep meaning of our baptism in the Name of the Triune God. Baptism is not a mere ritual but a powerful symbol of our faith and commitment to God.

2. Does Baptism Save You?

How do we interpret the phrase in **verse 21**, “*This water symbolises baptism that now saves you?*” Some churches use this phrase to say that baptism saves you. Therefore, those churches have said, “Unless you get baptised in water, you’re not saved. They say Noah was saved by water. You, too, must be saved by water.”

That does not make sense in the Bible, not even in 1 Peter 3:21.

- In the context of the Bible, Paul clearly states in Gal 6:15, "Neither circumcision nor uncircumcision means anything; what counts is a new creation." In Eph 2:8-9, Paul says, "For it is by grace you have been saved, through faith — and this not from yourselves, it is the gift of God—⁹ not by works, so that no one can boast."

The Bible will not contradict itself, saying, "There is just one exception. You have to be baptised. Apart from that, it's nothing but faith." That doesn't make biblical sense at all. Furthermore, we have seen that Noah was threatened by water and saved by the ark. Likewise, we are not saved by water but by getting into the ark, which is Jesus Christ who saves us from God's judgment.

- In the context of 1 Pet 3:21, Peter makes sure you understand it that way. Though some churches say you must be baptised to be saved, 1 Peter 3:21 means that it's not the baptismal waters that save you. Many people use water to cleanse them from a guilty conscience and their sins. Pontious Pilate washed his hands after he gave the go-ahead to crucify Jesus, somehow thinking that washing his hands in water would cleanse him from guilt. Hindus bathe in the Ganges river for their spiritual cleansing. Psychologists will tell you that many people are obsessive about washing their hands because, deep down, they suffer from guilt and uncleanness of past wrongs done. But water, including baptismal waters, can only remove dirt from your physical body and nothing more. It cannot save you. Instead, *it's the pledge of a clear conscience towards God*, that saves you. When you get baptised, what saves you is not the water on your body but the pledge, a public demonstration that you have committed to trusting the gospel and realising your sins are forgiven. You don't get baptised to get your sins forgiven. You get baptised because your sins are forgiven, and faith in the gospel alone is what saves you.

So, what is meant by **pledge of a clear conscience**? Consider a young man that swears undying love for a young woman. But if he not prepared to have a wedding and marry her, then all his swearing and pledges are made with a bad conscience. A wedding will prove that his pledge was sincere and made with a clear conscience. A wedding is an outward and visible sign of what was in his heart toward the young woman. Similarly, baptism is an outward and visible sign that a person, by God's grace, has trusted Jesus as Saviour and Lord. That is why

Augustine of Hippo defined sacrament as an outward and visible sign of an inward and invisible grace.

When Peter says, "*Baptism ... now saves you,*" he's saying something similar to what we affirm when we say, "The gospel saves you." The gospel is God's promise that the death and resurrection of Jesus have dealt with the problem of sin and judgment—if we put our faith in Jesus. **Baptism is that promise in physical form.** Baptism is trusting God's promise that we have been saved "*by the resurrection of Jesus Christ*" (1 Pet 3:21)—for if Jesus did not rise from the dead, then our sins are not forgiven (1 Cor 15:17 *And if Christ has not been raised, your faith is futile; you are still in your sins*).

But also note the context of 1 Pet 3:21 was when Christians were facing horrible persecution (1 Pet 4:12-16) and yet Peter speaks about baptism, irrespective of the consequences and circumstance. I believe God uses the sacrament of baptism to seal a believer's pledge made with a clear conscience to follow Jesus, even as they face persecution.

3. Baptism as a sign and seal of salvation

Are they married if a man slips a ring on a woman's finger at a party? Of course not! Similarly, are they united to Christ if someone accidentally falls into the baptistery? Certainly not! The exchanging of rings confirms a marriage only in the context of a wedding ceremony in which a couple vows to each other out of their free will, in the presence of witnesses. Likewise, baptism **confirms** someone as a Christian only when someone responds with faith to the promises in baptism and only in the context of a baptismal ceremony conducted by the church or validated by the church. So, in such a context, we can say that baptism saves you.

On the day of Pentecost, the apostle Peter in Acts 2, filled with the Holy Spirit, proclaimed the death and resurrection of Jesus. His hearers were "*cut to the heart*" and said, "*What shall we do?*" Peter replied, "*Repent and be baptised every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins, and you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit, for the promise is for you, your children, and all who are far off, everyone whom the Lord our God calls to himself*" (Acts 2:37-39). So, according to Peter, **we must be baptised.** We must go through the waters that symbolise judgment. We're saying, "Yes, I am wicked and deserve judgment." But also, we're identifying with Jesus. By faith, we unite ourselves to Jesus. So *His* death is our death, and *His* resurrection is our resurrection to a new life in Christ (Rom 6:3-4).

So, my baptism points me away from myself and toward what Jesus did for me by His death on the cross, His burial and resurrection. My baptism points me to Him and His work for me. You are baptised "in the name of Jesus for the forgiveness of your sins," says Peter (Acts 2:38). Baptism points me to my union with Christ, or "in Christ." Just as future generations of Israel lived as free people in the promised land because the first generation had passed through the waters of the Red Sea and the Jordan River, so in the New Testament, we live as free people with an inheritance in the new creation because Jesus (our representative) passed through the judgment of death and resurrection.

In Romans 4:11, Paul describes circumcision as a "sign," "as a seal of the righteousness" that *Abraham had by faith while he was still uncircumcised*. In the same way, baptism is a sign and seal of God's promise to us of salvation. Baptism is a public declaration that we have humbly accepted Jesus' offer of salvation and have surrendered to Him as our Lord. We have humbly accepted the new covenant in Jesus Christ.

4. Baptism is a command of Jesus.

At the end of His ministry on earth, Jesus told his disciples: "*All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me.*"¹⁹ *Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptising 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.*" (Matt 28:18-20).

In a way, baptism is like a wedding. Marriage is more than a wedding. But a wedding is essential. It's a public declaration of your marriage. After this, you cannot be half married and half single. You are entirely married. It signals your change of status. You may not feel different. But your status has changed completely. It is not that you need to live like a married person so you can have a wedding. It is the other way around: you must have a wedding to live as a married person.

It is the same with baptism. Baptism changes your status. It declares that you are a Christian, a follower of Christ, and in Christ. You have died with him and risen with him. You have accepted the new covenant that God made with believers in Christ. **Our relationship with God does not begin at baptism, but baptism is when it is made public.** Asking why we should get baptised is like asking a couple why they want a wedding.

3. Baptism — Its Purpose and Significance

Introduction: Baptism is a sacrament (ordinance) that our Lord Jesus instituted and commanded His disciples to obey until the end of the age. (Matt 28:18-20)

Outline:

1. Purpose of Baptism
2. Meaning and Significance of Baptism

1. Purpose of Baptism. There are two primary purposes of baptism:

(a) **Baptism is a public declaration of faith in Jesus Christ as Saviour and Lord.** The New Testament does not teach that Baptism by itself saves us, for we are saved by grace alone through faith alone in Christ alone, as our Saviour, Lord, and King. Yet when we read of those who believed in the gospel in the book of Acts, we read they were all baptised (Acts 2:41; 8:12-13, 36-39; 9:17-18; 10:47-48; 16:14-15, 31-33; 18:8; 19:5). Therefore, we can say that no New Testament Christian exists who is not baptised. The exception is the believing thief on the cross, who died soon after he accepted Jesus as Saviour and Lord and had no opportunity to be baptised. Christ commands His followers to preach the gospel and make disciples by baptising and instructing them in all He has commanded (Matt 28:19-20).

(b) **Baptism is an initiation sign of membership in the universal Church, God's New Covenant people.** Because baptism signifies a believer's union with Christ in His life, death, burial, and resurrection, it becomes a powerful symbol of our shared faith and unity in Christ. The standard practice is you must be baptised in a local church in front of witnesses by a Christian who, in a way, would represent the entire Body of Christ worldwide. A local church must also approve exceptions. Only then, if you leave that local church and join another church, you don't have to be baptised again. This universal unity in baptism is a beautiful testament to the global reach and unifying power of our faith in Christ.

2. Meaning and Significance of Baptism.

All evangelical churches believe in four scriptural truths concerning the meaning and significance of baptism, although they may differ in their other aspects. (See Appendix-1 for different views on water baptism.) These four truths are deeply rooted in the Scriptures and provide a solid foundation for our faith and understanding of baptism. They reinforce the authority of the Church's beliefs.

(i) Baptism is the primary means God gave the church to declare publicly our faith in Christ as Lord and Savior.

After the outpouring of the Holy Spirit in Pentecost (Acts 2), Peter preached his first sermon on Jesus as Lord and Messiah. Jews from different parts of the world heard the gospel message. They were cut to the heart and asked, "What shall we do?" (Acts 2:37). Peter replied, "Repent and be baptised in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins..."⁴¹ *Those who accepted his message were baptised, and about three thousand were added to their number that day.*" (Acts 2:38, 41). This means repentance and baptism signifies a believer's submission to Christ as Lord and Saviour. This truth is important. Those Jews heard and accepted Peter's message and, as a result, became believers in Christ. But they also had to be baptised. Baptism is essential even after a person responds to altar calls in an evangelistic meeting.

(ii) Baptism beautifully and powerfully signifies a believer's union with Christ in His death, burial, and resurrection, as well as all the benefits of that union.

Rom 6:3-4 Or don't you know that all of us who were baptised into Christ Jesus were baptised into his death? ⁴ We were therefore buried with him through baptism into death so that, just as Christ was raised from the dead through the glory of the Father, we too may live a new life.

For this reason, in the New Testament, baptism is regarded as an outward sign that signifies an inward reality, namely that a believer has entered into the realities of the New Covenant that Jesus inaugurated and sealed with His own blood on the cross. Therefore, when received in faith, baptism signifies:

- The Holy Spirit is active in our new birth in Christ (*Titus 3:5 He saved us, not because of righteous things we had done, but because of His mercy. He saved us through the washing of rebirth and renewal by the Holy Spirit*).
- Inward cleansing and forgiveness of sins (*Acts 22:16 And now what are you waiting for? Get up, be baptised and wash your sins away, calling on his name.*).
- The Holy Spirit resides in us as God's seal. He testifies and guarantees that the believer will be permanently kept secure in Christ (*1 Cor 12:13 For in one Spirit we were all baptised into one body — Jews or Greeks, slaves or free and all were made to drink of one Spirit*).

The association between Baptism and New Covenant blessings in Christ is so close that baptism is a beautiful and powerful expression of our conversion experience.

For example, in *Gal 3:26-27*, Paul says: "For in Christ Jesus, you are all sons of God, through faith. For as many of you as were baptised into Christ have **put on Christ**. There is neither Jew nor Greek; there is neither slave nor free; there is no male and female, for you are all one in Christ Jesus".

("Put on Christ" refers to our union with Him).

However, note how Paul talks of becoming a child of God first through faith (verse 26) and then links it immediately to baptism (verse 27). Only the genuinely converted through faith could be a child of God and, therefore, in union with Christ (verse 26). Baptism can only be an outward sign of conversion that the believer has put on Christ, i.e., in union with Christ (verse 27).

(iii) Baptism signifies a believer's entrance into the church.

In *Gal 3:27-28* above, Paul immediately moved from "put on Christ" in baptism to how we are one in the Body of Christ. Thus, baptised believers (about 3000 of them) understood they had entered as members of the one Body of Christ, the Church. So, they publicly identified with the Lord and His people, as in *Acts 2:40-42*. "With many other words, he [Peter] warned them, and he pleaded with them, "Save yourselves from this corrupt generation."⁴¹ Those who accepted his message were baptised, and **about three thousand were added** to their number that day. ⁴² They devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching and to fellowship, to the breaking of bread and to prayer."

(iv) Baptism is a promise and glorious anticipation of the fact that all things will be bought to completion by Christ

Baptism signifies that believers have entered the new creation due to their union with Christ, who brings the new creation on earth. This is why Paul can say in *2 Cor 5:17*, "If anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation; the old has gone, the new has come". As such, in baptism, we look back and look forward. We look back to the inauguration of the new age in Christ's first coming and look forward to its completion at His return. By baptism, we participate in these two realities. Baptism is our entry into God's plan of the new creation we now experience due to our covenantal union with Christ. But also it is being sealed with the Spirit for the day of our complete redemption in the future (*Eph 4:30 And do not grieve the Holy Spirit of God, with whom you were sealed for the day of redemption*).

4. Baptism Shapes Our Lives

Introduction

The question arises: If water baptism doesn't save you, then is it only a Christian ritual we must obey and then forget for the rest of our lives? Certainly not! The apostles often point us back to our baptism (1 Cor 12:12-14, Gal 3:6-29, Col 2:11-12, 1 Pet 3:18-22). They expect baptism to shape our behaviour and attitudes and, in effect, our lives. But how can it shape our lives? How does it help us walk as disciples of Jesus? Is there grace and power in baptism to do that? Yes, there is!

When approached with faith, baptism is not just a ritual we undergo but a transformative act. It not only does something within us; it does something to us and changes us. Baptism shapes us by completely altering our status, identity, and behaviour.

Outline:

1. Baptism Shapes us by changing our Status
2. Baptism Shapes us by changing our Identity
3. Baptism Shapes us by changing our Behaviour
4. Baptism Shapes us into Christlikeness

1. Baptism shapes us by changing our Status.

When a couple gets married, their status changes. Their status can never be single again. They could be widowed or even divorced, but not single. Marriage brings their love for each other to a bond that cannot be forgotten or separated. **God is in that bond**, joining them together, giving the couple grace and power to bless each other and persevere to live a unified existence in the world as "a couple" (*Matt 19:6 So they are no longer two, but one flesh. Therefore, what God has joined together, let no one separate*). **Furthermore, in most places in the world, the bride changes her surname to her husband's as a sign of belonging to him.**

Likewise, in baptism, our status changes from that of a non-believer to that of a believer who becomes a member of the Body of Christ, the Church. In response to Peter's sermon on the day of Pentecost, about three thousand people believed and were baptised and were added to the church (*Acts 2:41-42 Those who accepted his message were baptised, and about three thousand were added*

to their number that day. ⁴² They devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching and to fellowship, to the breaking of bread and to prayer).

2. **Baptism shapes us by changing our Identity.**

But the central and most crucial point in our baptism is the name into which we've been baptised—the name (not names) of the Triune God. The name of the three-persons-in-one God is the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit. It's the first time in the Bible that the name of the Triune God is explicitly written, and it is in our baptism (Matt 28:19). **It tells us something significant about our fellowship and relationship with the Father who loved us, the Son who died for us and the Holy Spirit who transforms us.**

The Old Testament Aaronic blessing is given in Num 6:24-27, "The LORD bless you and keep you; ²⁵ the LORD make his face shine on you and be gracious to you; ²⁶ the LORD turn his face toward you and give you peace." ²⁷ "So they will put my name on the Israelites, and I will bless them."

Notice the Aaronic blessing in verses 24-26 reflects the Trinity, the LORD—the LORD—the LORD. But notice the last verse (verse 27)—"So they will put **my name** on the Israelites, and I will bless them". This Aaronic blessing points towards our baptism in the name of the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit. He puts His Name on us. We belong to Him, and He blesses us. We are part of the Body of Christ. **Nothing can separate us from the bond we have with God.**

John 10:28-30 I give them eternal life, and they shall never perish; no one can snatch them out of my hand. ²⁹ My Father, who has given them to me, is greater than all; no one can snatch them out of my Father's hand. ³⁰ I and the Father are one."

Rom 8:38-39 For I am convinced that neither death nor life, neither angels nor demons, neither the present nor the future, nor any powers, ³⁹ neither height nor depth nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God that is in Christ Jesus our Lord.

In baptism, all generational curses are broken in our lives. Instead of curses, we are blessed by God (Gal 3:13-14, Jer 32:40-41). No longer are we high caste or low caste. But our new identity is that we are children of the Father (John 1:8-9, Gal 4:7) and the Bride of Christ (Eph 5:25-27).

The Lutheran Church mentions that Martin Luther, whom God used to start the Reformation in 1520 AD, repeatedly declared, "I am a baptised man" when he struggled under stress, doubts and persecution.

Luther even advised his followers to remember their baptism when they washed their faces every morning as a reminder that they were baptised in the Name of the Triune God — Father, Son and Holy Spirit. In doing this, they would **joyfully** remember that they belonged to God and had the privilege of being loved by the Father, saved by the Son and continuously transformed by the Holy Spirit. It would lift their eyes away from their sinfulness and the difficulties and stresses they faced. It would cause them to look at our Lord Jesus Christ and remind them that all the promises of God in the Bible are yes in Jesus Christ. The promises in the New Covenant are amazing. See some of them below.

God promised the Israelites that He would make a new covenant (Jer 31:33-34) so that believers would have God's law written in their hearts, causing them to obey the Lord. They would all know the Lord for themselves. Furthermore, **God would never stop doing good to them** and would inspire them to fear Him (Jer 32:40-41).

Jer 32:40-41 I will make an everlasting covenant with them: I will never stop doing good to them, and I will inspire them to fear me so that they will never turn away from me. ⁴¹ I will rejoice in doing them good and will assuredly plant them in this land with all my heart and soul.

3. Baptism shapes us by changing our behaviour

What does it mean to live "a baptised life": it means we are people whose status and identity have radically changed. We have become Christ's. We have a new identity. Baptism is a naming ceremony, and as a result, we are now the children of God. Or if baptism is like a wedding, then we are now the bride of Christ. We have done nothing to achieve this. So, in moments of stress, guilt, fear, frustration, or despair, I look back to my baptism and say, "I am a baptised man, and I live a baptised life."

The same is true of moments of temptation. If, as a married man, I am tempted to unfaithfulness, I immediately declare, "I am a married man, and I live a married life with my wife". Similarly, when tempted in my Christian life, I need to look to my baptism and say, "I am a baptised man, and I live a baptised life." God comes in with His grace and power to uphold my decision to live faithfully.

Once we have been baptised, our thinking needs to catch up with our new status. We are now to live this new reality. We live as those who have died to sin and risen to a new life with Christ. We need to think of ourselves as baptised people. This is the message of Romans 6.

Rom 6:3-4 Or don't you know that all of us who were baptised into Christ Jesus were baptised into his death? ⁴ We were therefore buried with him through baptism into death in order that, just as Christ was raised from the dead through the glory of the Father, we too may live a new life.

Why should you struggle to stop sinning? Paul's answer is this: You have been baptised. Your **baptism is the visible sign** that your old self died with Christ, and you have risen to a new life. You used to be an in-Adam person, under the power of sin, under the reign of death. But now you are an in-Christ person, set free to live a new life. **You are a new person with a new life to live.** And sin shall not be your master. You declare this by faith and live it out by faith. The Holy Spirit confirms it in your heart.

Paul tells us baptism is a new birth into a royal family with a new identity. It is not just a new set of beliefs or a change of opinion. It is a death and a rebirth! We die with Christ, and we are reborn with Christ.

So baptism is also like a funeral service in which you mark the death of your old self. Indeed, you bury it. That is what happens as the water covers you. And then, in the next moment—as you emerge from the water—baptism becomes a naming ceremony marking the rebirth of your new self. Like a newborn child, you are given a new name as you are baptised in the name of the Father, the Son, and the Spirit. You become part of the family of God.

Consider marriage. After you get married, you must act according to your new status — the new reality of marriage. Imagine someone wants to buy a piece of your home furniture. Can you fix the price and sell it? No, you can't. Why? Because you're married now and need to seek your spouse's approval. You have to die to your singleness and be alive to your spouse. Every day, you must think of yourself differently because your status has changed.

In the same way, as a baptised Christian, "*Count yourselves dead to sin but alive to God in Christ Jesus*" (Rom 6:11). Live as baptised people. You may have been baptised many years ago. But every day, you would have to look back to that moment and remember the reality of your baptism. Every day, you are to count

yourself dead to sin and alive to God. As Martin Luther advises, remember your baptism every morning as you wash your face.

At baptism, our identity changes. We no longer identify ourselves with the world and its values. Though we live and work in the world, we are not of the world and are not shaped by worldly values anymore. We identify ourselves with God's people, the Church. That is why Paul keeps pointing people back to their baptism. Here are some examples.

1 Cor 12:12-14 Just as a [human] body, though one, has many parts, but all its many parts form one body, so it is with Christ.¹³ For we were all baptised by one Spirit to form one body—whether Jews or Gentiles, slave or free—and we were all given the one Spirit to drink.¹⁴ Even so, the body is not made up of one part but of many.

Paul's argument is this: A human body has many limbs and organs, which work together. They need one another. In the same way, the church is a body made up of many individual members. And we need one another. We need to work together. But notice the importance of baptism in this argument. Baptism is the sign that we have joined the body of Christ, the Church. As a baptised believer, your status has changed. You are not on your own anymore. You are one of the family of God.

Gal 3:26-29 So in Christ Jesus you are all children of God through faith,²⁷ for all of you who were baptised into Christ have clothed yourselves with Christ.²⁸ There is neither Jew nor Gentile, neither slave nor free, nor is there male and female, for you are all one in Christ Jesus.²⁹ If you belong to Christ, then you are Abraham's seed and heirs according to the promise.

Some people in Galatia were saying Gentile converts needed to be circumcised because Gentiles were not God's people and, therefore, first had to be circumcised to be part of God's people before they accepted Christ. But Paul would say, "You are all children of God if you believe in Jesus as Saviour and Lord." The only thing that matters is "faith." What makes us God's children is not whether we are Jew or Gentile, not our social status, not even our gender, but Christ. Baptism is a visible sign that we belong to Christ and His Church. We were baptised into Christ. We were clothed with Christ (which means in union with Christ)

Col 2:11-12 In him, you were also circumcised with a circumcision not performed by human hands. Your whole self, ruled by the flesh, was put off

when you were circumcised by Christ,¹² having been buried with him in baptism, in which you were also raised with him through your faith in the working of God, who raised him from the dead.

People in Colossae said you needed to keep the law to conquer the desires of the flesh. For that matter, even today, many Christians feel they have to keep the law to conquer the desires of the flesh. But Paul says that's wrong because victory has already happened. Your flesh died with Christ, and you have risen to a new life with Christ. You know it because, in your baptism, you visually acted out your dying with Christ and rising with Him. You live now by faith in the resurrection power of Christ.

4. Baptism shapes us into Christlikeness

Baptism is like a mould that shapes you into Christlikeness. Baptism reminds you daily of dying with Christ and living by His resurrection power, thus blessing others (2 Cor 4:10-12). Baptism reminds you that identifying with Christ in suffering for His name and gospel will bring God's glory to rest on you (1Pet 4:12-14).

2 Cor 4:10-12 We always carry around in our body the death of Jesus, so that the life of Jesus may also be revealed in our body.¹¹ For we who are alive are always being given over to death for Jesus' sake, so that his life may be revealed in our mortal body.¹² So then, death is at work in us, but life is at work in you.

1 Peter 4:12-14 Dear friends, do not be surprised at the painful trial you are suffering, as though something strange were happening to you.¹³ But rejoice that you participate in the sufferings of Christ, so that you may be overjoyed when his glory is revealed.¹⁴ If you are insulted because of the name of Christ, you are blessed, for the Spirit of glory and of God rests on you.

Remember that baptism is Jesus's command at the beginning of our Christian walk. It is like a mould that reshapes our lives according to a new design—the design of Christ's death and resurrection and His gospel mission.

5. God's Presence and the Meal in the Old Testament

Introduction

From Creation to the New Heaven and Earth, from *Genesis* to *Revelation*, God's heart has always been to dwell with His people in a **covenant relationship** and **provide them with a sumptuous meal, like a banquet**, to enjoy eating and drinking in His presence.

In general, covenant language is a three-part formula:

I will be their God (*Gen 17:7-8*). I will take you as my own people (*Exod 6:7*)

I will dwell among you (*Exod 29:45-46*)

It is like a husband telling his wife:

I will be your husband. You will be my wife

I will dwell with you (I will protect you and provide for you)

God speaks to His people in the same covenant language many times.

Lev 26:12 I will walk among you and be your God, and you will be my people.

2 Cor 6:16 As God has said: "I will live with them and walk among them, and I will be their God, and they will be my people.

Rev 21:3-4 And I heard a loud voice from the throne saying, "Look! God's dwelling place is now among the people, and he will dwell with them. They will be his people, and God himself will be with them and be their God.

(Other examples: *Exod 6:7*; *Jer 31:33*; *32:38*; *Zech 8:8*)

Outline

1. Creation
2. Fall
3. Redemption
4. Journey Mercies
5. Worship, Grace & the Old Covenant
6. Israel, the Promised Land—found and lost and found again in Christ

1. Creation

God created the heavens and the earth and placed human beings (our first parents, Adam and Eve) in the Garden of Eden. Amazingly, His first words to them were about food, "You are free to eat from any tree in the garden;¹⁷ but you must not eat from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, for when you eat from it you will certainly die" (*Gen 2:16*). They walked with God (*Gen 3:8*). From

Creation, it has always been God's heart to dwell with humanity and provide generously and lovingly for them with a feast of food. Eating and drinking in God's presence is God's heart for His people.

2. Fall

But humanity rebelled against God, doubting His love and generosity, and decided to live independently of Him by eating the only fruit that God forbade. God made that one fruit an exception to enable them to express their trust in Him and obey His rule.

After eating the forbidden fruit, Adam and Eve immediately felt guilt and shame and hid from God (Gen. 3:8). Humanity henceforth suffers from guilt and shame and is separated from God. God planned for us to enjoy eating and drinking in His presence. **But God is absent from all our relationships and meals after the Fall.** We struggle with both and find no satisfaction with both. Only God can satisfy us, and He is absent.

3. Redemption

But God, in His grace, did not leave us to our plight. He called Abraham, made a covenant with him, and promised that through Abraham's descendants, God would save a people and create a new humanity (Gen 12:1-7). Abraham's descendants became the nation of Israel through his son Isaac and grandson Jacob. The Israelites became slaves in Egypt. But God sent Moses to lead them to freedom. God sent a series of plagues, even killing every firstborn Egyptian son, to force the Pharaoh to let God's people, the Israelites, go free. (Exod 11).

It is not that the Israelites were less sinful than the Egyptians. But God, in His grace, remembered His covenant with Abraham and provided the Israelites a way to escape judgment from sin, and at the same time, redeemed them from Egyptian slavery. The Israelites had to sacrifice a lamb and put its blood around the doorpost of their homes. Wherever God saw the blood, the angel of death "**passed over**" that house (Exod 12:12-13), and the Israelite firstborn son was spared. God's people were redeemed from slavery through the shedding of blood. They safely ate the meal of a roasted sacrificed lamb inside their homes. It was called the **Passover meal**. God commanded the Israelites to celebrate the Passover meal for generations to come as a powerful reminder of what He had done for His people. It gave them an identity that they were God's people, redeemed by Him — **and all this was expressed in a meal.** (Note: Jesus is the Passover Lamb — 1 Cor 5:7).

4. Journey Mercies

The journey from Egypt to the Promised Land (Israel) was through the desert. Soon, the Israelites began to grumble and complain about desert food. They said Egyptian food was better (Exod 16:1-3). They were forgetting what God had done for them. Such dissatisfaction deserved God's judgment. But in His mercy, God brought the rod of judgment on Himself. He told Moses to strike the rock (Jesus), and water poured out (Exod 17:6). Meanwhile, God provided bread from heaven in the morning and quail in the evening. Everyone got as much as they could eat (Exod 16:4-8). God's grace came as a meal, showing His people that He truly satisfies them. They could trust Him for journey mercies. The Apostle Paul warns us that we should not take these journey mercies for granted and live ungodly as the Israelites did in the desert.

*1 Cor 10:1-6 For I do not want you to be ignorant of the fact, brothers, that our forefathers were all under the cloud and that they all passed through the sea. ² They were all baptised into Moses in the cloud and in the sea. ³ They all ate the same spiritual food ⁴ and drank the same spiritual drink; for they drank from the spiritual rock that accompanied them, and **that rock was Christ.** ⁵ Nevertheless, God was not pleased with most of them; their bodies were scattered over the desert. ⁶ Now, these things occurred as examples to keep us from setting our hearts on evil things as they did.*

5. Worship, Grace and the Old Covenant

Ex 3:11-12 But Moses said to God, "Who am I, that I should go to Pharaoh and bring the Israelites out of Egypt?" ¹² And God said, "I will be with you. And this will be the sign to you that it is I who have sent you: When you have brought the people out of Egypt, you will worship God on this mountain."

When God commissioned Moses to bring the Israelites out from slavery and bondage under Pharaoh, God promised Moses that He would be with him. Further, God gave Moses a sign that they would worship God on Mount Sinai after bringing them out of Egypt (verse 12). God's purpose was not just deliverance from oppression and slavery, but God rescued the Israelites to worship Him

When the Israelites camped at the foot of Mount Sinai, God descended in fire on the mountaintop, and the whole mountain trembled violently. Loud trumpet sounds were heard, and clouds of smoke erupted like from a furnace. The Israelites were terrified by His awesome holiness. Not even the priests could

step onto the mountain, or God would break out against them (Exodus 19:16-24). How could a sinful people meet with such a glorious and awesome holy God?

And yet, when Moses came down at the foot of the mountain, God made a covenant with the Israelites, which He had earlier promised in Exodus 6:7 to be their God, and they His people. This relationship was possible only because of the blood sacrifice of animals (that pointed to the ultimate sacrifice that Jesus would make for the atonement of our sins). Half the blood was splashed on the altar at the foot of the mountain, signifying that God would forgive the sins of His people and a half was sprinkled on the people, indicating they agreed to obey the Lord's commandments that God gave Moses on the mountaintop in Exodus 20-23. And so, the covenant was confirmed (Exodus 24:5-8). Then, an amazing thing happened. Israel's representatives went up the mountain, saw God and ate and drank in His presence. **This is the climax of the Exodus story. This is amazing grace — to have a meal in the presence of God.**

Exodus 24:9-11 Moses and Aaron, Nadab and Abihu, and the seventy elders of Israel went up ¹⁰ and saw the God of Israel. Under his feet was something like a pavement made of sapphire, clear as the sky itself. ¹¹ But God did not raise his hand against these leaders of the Israelites; they saw God, and they ate and drank.

Bread of Presence: Soon after the mountaintop meeting, God gave Moses the design of the Tabernacle as a sign of His presence among His people in Exodus 25. In a sense, it captures what occurred on the Sinai mountaintop in Exodus 24. The Tabernacle had an altar of incense that created a cloud of smoke around the Most Holy Place, like the clouds of smoke on the Sinai Mountaintop when God met with His people. The Tabernacle had a table of 12 loaves of freshly baked bread that only the priests could eat, for the priests spiritually represented the 12 tribes of Israel before God. The bread they ate reminds them of the meal in the presence of God on the mountaintop. Significantly, the bread is called the **Bread of Presence** (Exodus 25:30). Bread is also food that God provides to sustain His people. It points to Jesus, who said, "I AM the Bread of life" (John 6:35).

6. Israel, the Promised Land — found and lost and found again in Christ

Joshua led the Israelites into the Promised Land of Canaan, which the Bible describes 48 times as a land flowing with "milk and honey." In the golden age of Israel under King Solomon, the Temple was built, and the glory of the Lord filled the Temple (1 Kings 8:10-11). The Presence of God was in their midst. The

Israelites received the covenant blessings in Deut 28:1-14 — of abundant food, security and happiness as they kept God's covenant. *"The people of Judah and Israel were as numerous as the sand on the seashore; they ate, they drank, and they were happy"* (1 Kings 4:20). **Once again, we see the heart of God for His people, namely, to dwell among them and provide a sumptuous meal for them.**

But in their prosperity, Israel turned to idolatry and practised injustice. Instead of blessings, they experienced covenant curses (Deut 28:15-20, 36-42). The prophet Joel warned God's people in Joel 1:16, *"Has not the food been cut off before our very eyes — joy and gladness from the house of our God?"*. **They lost the presence of God and experienced famine and exile.**

Yet, God, in His mercy, did not abandon His people. He revealed a new future for them. *"On this mountain, the Lord Almighty will prepare a feast of rich food for all peoples, a banquet of aged wine, which has the best meats and the finest wines. ⁷On this mountain, he will destroy the shroud that enfolds all peoples, the sheet that covers all nations; ⁸he will swallow up death forever. The Sovereign LORD will wipe away the tears from all faces; he will remove his people's disgrace from all the earth. The LORD has spoken (Isa 25:6-8).*

Isa 25:6-8 tells us that there will be a time in the future when God Almighty will:

- (i) Prepare a feast of the rich food of the best meats and finest wines for all people
- (ii) Defeat the final enemy, "death" forever in all nations.
- (iii) Wipe away tears from all faces
- (iv) Remove disgrace (shame and guilt) from all the earth

But this feast is for all **His** people, from all nations, from all the earth, not just Israel. God refers to His people who have entered into covenant relationships with Him in the New Covenant, those who have trusted Jesus as Saviour and Lord. This feast will be forever, not just for a short time or season. **We will eat, drink, and be happy** as Israel did during its golden age under King Solomon. **This is our hope: a feast God prepared for His people in God's presence.**

We cannot do anything, nor contribute anything, to this meal. God Himself will pay the price and invite us to His banquet. *Isaiah 55:1-2: "Come, all you who are thirsty, come to the waters; and you who have no money, come, buy and eat! Come, buy wine and milk without money and without cost. ² Why spend money on what is not bread, and your labor on what does not satisfy? Listen, listen to me, and eat what is good, and you will delight in the richest of fare.*

6. Presence of Christ in the Lord's Supper

Outline

1. John 6 and the Lord's Supper
2. Bread and Wine in the Lord's Supper as signs of the New Covenant
3. Encountering the Presence of Christ in the Lord's Supper
4. Prominent Christian Leaders and Denominations

1. John 6 and the Lord's Supper

John 6:53-58 *Jesus said to them, "Very truly I tell you, unless you eat the flesh of the Son of Man and drink his blood, you have no life in you."⁵⁴ Whoever eats my flesh and drinks my blood has eternal life, and I will raise them up at the last day.⁵⁵ For my flesh is real food and my blood is real drink.⁵⁶ Whoever eats my flesh and drinks my blood remains in me, and I in them.⁵⁷ Just as the living Father sent me and I live because of the Father, so the one who feeds on me will live because of me.⁵⁸ This is the bread that came down from heaven. Your ancestors ate manna and died, but whoever feeds on this bread will live forever.*

Though the setting in John 6 is not of the Last Supper, it illustrates the significance of the bread and wine at the Last Supper. In John 6:53-58, Jesus speaks about being the Bread of Life and the necessity of eating His flesh and drinking His blood to have eternal life. Jesus was not referring to these verses as salvation by eating and drinking in the Lord's Supper for two reasons—(a) the Last Supper was not done as yet, and (b) salvation is by faith alone in Jesus Christ's death and resurrection and not by partaking the Lord's Supper.

Jesus' message in John 6:53-58 was not literal but deeply spiritual (John 6:63 *The Spirit gives life; the flesh counts for nothing. The words I have spoken to you — they are full of the Spirit and life*). Just as eating and drinking are essential for physical life, His sacrificial death on the cross is essential for eternal life.

Therefore, the act of eating His flesh and drinking His blood symbolises our dependence on His sacrificial death for our salvation. This is further clarified in John 6:35, Where Jesus declares, *"I am the bread of life. Whoever comes to me will never go hungry, and whoever believes in me will never be thirsty"*. So, what does it mean to eat and drink? It means to come and believe! *"Whoever comes to me will never go hungry"*, and *"Whoever believes in me shall never be thirsty"*. In

other words, eating and drinking symbolise the spiritual acts of our souls drawing near to Christ, receiving him, and trusting him to satisfy our souls' eternal hunger and thirst—our "eternal salvation", fulfilling our spiritual needs and nourishing our souls with the spiritual sustenance of Christ's presence.

2. Bread and Wine in the Lord's Supper as signs of the New Covenant

When we partake of the Lord's Supper in church, we partake of the bread and wine, which in themselves remain bread and wine but symbolise the body and blood of our Lord Jesus. But more than symbols, they are signs of His covenanted love for us, and as we shall see, partaking in them shows our dependence on what Christ has done for us as if we are feeding on Christ.

Martin Luther says: *"I preach the gospel of Christ, and with my bodily voice I bring Christ into your heart, so that you may form Him within yourself...How that comes about, you cannot know, but your heart truly feels His presence, and through the experience of faith, you know for a certainty that He is there."* (taken from Dr Gordon Isaac on Luther's approach to scripture).

The sixteenth-century Reformers, Luther, Calvin, and others, felt that just as we meet Christ in His word, we will also experience Him in the Lord's Supper, but in a more meaningful way. You might wonder, if we have God's word, why do we seek Him in the Lord's Supper? The answer is that the bread and wine are signs of His covenanted love.

Let me explain: Just as married couples use more than loving words, they also include physical signs of their love for each other, and so does our Lord Jesus. In the Lord's Supper, the elements of bread and wine are physical signs of His love for us.

Through hugs and kisses, married couples understand the language of love and experience what it means whenever they get close together. Hugs and kisses are not self-explanatory; for example, Judas betrayed our Lord Jesus with a kiss. But in the **context** of married life, hugs and kisses convey the language of love between the spouses, and they have the power to communicate the reality of that love that they signify.

Sinclair Ferguson quotes the great Scottish theologian Robert Bruce (1544-1631), who said, *"You do not get any different Christ in the Lord's Supper than what you get in the preaching of the word. But you may get the same Christ better"*.

The Holy Spirit is the Spirit of Christ (Rom 8:9), whom Jesus says will take what is His and make it known to you (John 16:14). In the Lord's Supper, the Holy Spirit shines on what Christ has done for you in the gospel. The Holy Spirit bridges the gap between Christ, who sits at the Father's right hand in heaven, and you, who sits on earth. Christ speaks to you through the Holy Spirit, saying, *"I love you so much that I gave My life for you. This bread means My body was given for you to make you whole. And this wine means My blood poured out for you for the forgiveness of your sins. My blood is the seal of the New Covenant and all the blessings and promises contained in it. It means I will never stop doing good to you (Luke 22:20, Jer 32:38-41). That's how much I love you"*. And we open our hearts to Jesus and say to Him, *"O Lord Jesus, I believe You love me. I believe you are Lord and defeated Satan. I open my heart to you. Come in and dine with me"*. This is a time for intimacy with the Lord. And we should return His love with our love for Him. So, God's self-giving love, His grace, His presence and His power flow to us in the Lord's Supper through the comforting presence of the Holy Spirit as we partake of the elements of bread and wine.

When my wife cooks my favourite dish and sits with me to share it, I can feel her love as I eat every bite. She is certainly not in the food, but somehow, the food conveys her love for me. Love is never static. Love is always dynamic. It moves from one person to another. Love is always self-giving, forgiving, and gracious. And the Lord's Supper is all this and much more because His love is the ultimate love.

3. Encountering the Presence of Christ in the Lord's Supper

So, we must not examine what happens to the bread and wine in isolation. If we do, we must choose between believing Christ is present in the bread or believing He is absent. Bread and wine are not to be seen in isolation from the worship community in the Lord's Supper.

This idea is central to Paul's 1 Corinthians 8-10 argument. At first, it might seem that this has little to do with the Supper. But let me explain that it does.

Paul begins with the words, *"Now about food offered to idols"* (1 Cor 8:1). He is probably referring to meat sold in the markets that had previously been offered to a false god in pagan ceremonies. It was offered to the gods on one day and to customers in the butcher's shop on the next day. It happens all the time in India. Imagine you are inviting a few friends from church over for a meal. So, you go to the butcher to buy some good meat. But as you stand in the butcher's

shop, you may think, "What if this meat was offered to a false god yesterday? Does that matter? Has the meat transformed into something evil?"

The church was divided. Some said it was okay; others disagreed. The Christians in Corinth probably wrote to Paul asking for his advice. Paul's response:

1 Cor 8:4-6 So then, about eating food sacrificed to idols: We know that "An idol is nothing at all in the world" and that "There is no God but one."⁵ For even if there are so-called gods, whether in heaven or on earth (as indeed there are many "gods" and many "lords"),⁶ yet for us there is but one God, the Father, from whom all things came and for whom we live; and there is but one Lord, Jesus Christ, through whom all things came and through whom we live.

Paul says an idol is nothing because there is only one true God—the Triune God of the Bible. All those other gods, whoever they may be, are not real gods. So, Paul is saying that if those gods are not real, they cannot change lumps of meat into anything — good or evil. Meat offered in pagan ceremonies is unaffected. It does not change into something else. It's just meat. So, eating meat bought in the market is fine. (*1 Cor 8:8 "But food does not bring us near to God; we are no worse if we do not eat, and no better if we do).* The principle is clear: eating meat offered to idols is fine because the meat does not change into something evil.

However, in 1 Corinthians 10, Paul returns to the issue of food and drink, and it looks like he has changed his mind. Paul referred to the example of the Israelites in the wilderness, who took part in idolatrous worship, eating and drinking with the idolaters. And here he says, God judged these people. They are an example and warning (1 Cor 10:6-7, 11). The problem is that they participated in idolatrous worship. And we can fall into temptation similarly (1 Cor 10:11-13). "Therefore, my dear friends," says Paul in verse 14, "flee from idolatry."

This conflicting advice (between 1 Cor 8 and 10) has confused many believers, especially in India, where we are confronted **daily** with different religious worship and sacrifices and the food accompanying them.

So now Paul brings clarity in 1 Cor 10:15-22, "I speak to sensible people; judge for yourselves what I say.¹⁶ Is not the cup of thanksgiving for which we give thanks a participation in the blood of Christ? And is not the bread that we break a participation in the body of Christ?¹⁷ Because there is one loaf, we, who are many, are one body, for we all share the one loaf."

¹⁸ Consider the people of Israel: Do not those who eat the sacrifices participate in the altar? ¹⁹ Do I mean then that food sacrificed to an idol is anything, or that an idol is anything? ²⁰ No, but the sacrifices of pagans are offered to demons, not to God, and I do not want you to be participants with demons. ²¹ You cannot drink the cup of the Lord and the cup of demons, too; you cannot have a part in both the Lord's table and the table of demons. ²² Are we trying to arouse the Lord's jealousy? Are we stronger than he?

Paul puts pagan worship and Christian worship side by side. As Paul said earlier, the meat does not change when offered to an idol. The same should be true of the bread and wine in the Lord's Supper. They do not change their properties. They do not become magic — either for good or for evil. It's just meat, bread, and wine.

But with food in the context of worship, everything changes. Context matters. In the context of the Christian community coming together in faith to worship Christ, eating bread and drinking wine become an act of participation or communion with Christ (1 Cor 10:15-17). Likewise, in the context of participating in false worship, eating food becomes a participation with demons.

The Lord's Supper in a Christian worship service is not just bread and wine; it is bread and wine with worship, prayers, and Bible readings in a community of faith. When we think about Christ's presence in the Lord's Supper, we should NOT look at the bread and wine as objects in isolation. We need to lift our eyes and see the *whole* meal. The bread does not mystically change us, as if it is some medicine. But neither is it merely a memory aid that touches our minds. It is part of a broader shared activity through which Christ is present by His Spirit.

So, the Lord's Supper is more than bread and wine. You can have bread and wine at home, and it means nothing. But bread and wine differ in the context of faith, community, and worship. Here, the bread and wine become an act of intimate communion with Christ. **And the intimate communion with Christ that you have in His Presence — that is what changes us.**

How does this happen? By the Holy Spirit. He connects us to Christ.

So, Christ is present when we partake of the Lord's Supper. He may not be there physically, but He is there spiritually, not artificially. He is there to reassure us of His love, protection, and covenant commitment. And the bread and wine are physical signs of His spiritual presence.

"But surely Christ is present with us by the Spirit all the time," you might say. "After all, that's what He promised before He ascended into heaven in Matthew 28:20." Yes. But, as in a marriage, the husband and wife use not only their words to express their love but also the hugs and kisses to reassure and nourish their love between them. So does Christ, in His kindness, knowing how up and down our emotions can be as we live in a fallen world, He has given us bread and wine in the Lord's Supper as physical signs of His presence and covenanted love for us.

Jesus says, "Do this in remembrance of Me". Many today think that remembering is merely thinking about something from the past. But biblically, remembering involves bringing the past into the present and allowing the past to shape the present actively. So, when we remember Christ in the Supper, we do not think about someone absent and disconnected from us. Instead, by faith, we identify with and are shaped by Christ, who is with us.

The bread and cup aren't here to help you recall an event in the past. They are here to remind you that God's promise is true because Christ's death for your sins is as real as the bread you taste and the cup you drink. **That's what you're supposed to remember.**

So, I advise you this: When you eat the bread and drink the wine, take your time to taste it. As surely as you can see and taste that, so surely has Christ died for you. You are tasting that the Lord is good to you and loves you. He gave His life for you — His body and blood. With the bread and wine in your hands, God is near you and becomes accessible to you.

But also look around the church and see your fellowmen partaking in the same loaf and cup you do. They are your local family—the local Body of Christ, among whom Christ is present. And you delight in them as you delight in Him.

You are in the midst of a portal, a spiritual column, connecting your church on earth to heaven, where Christ sits at the Father's right hand. I wouldn't be surprised if angels walked up and down this portal. Expect the miraculous.

Healing and Deliverance during the Lord's Supper. As worship leaders, my wife and I experienced God's tangible presence as we led worship, which sometimes resulted in people getting healed, strongholds broken, and people delivered of evil spirits. I had also seen people healed when I prayed for them in Jesus' Name — for by His stripes, we are healed (Isa 53:5). Though I have not witnessed remarkable healings in the Lord's Supper, I have heard of such healings

in the ministry of others. Since I believe the Lord is spiritually present during the Lord's Supper, I expect healing and miracles to occur whenever we participate.

4. Prominent Christian Leaders and Denominations who believe in the spiritual presence of Christ in the Lord's Supper

Finally, the presence of Christ in the Lord's Supper (Holy Communion) is so important that prominent Christian Leaders and denominations teach it — but in varying degrees. They do it with the utmost sincerity, which we must all respect.

- **John Calvin** taught Reformed Theology and believed in the spiritual presence of Christ in the Lord's Supper as the participants receive the bread and wine by faith during a church worship service. **The Presbyterian Churches** follow Calvin's Reformed Theology
- **Charles Spurgeon (Particular Baptist) and John Piper (Reformed Baptist)**, like Calvin, taught the spiritual presence of Christ in the Lord's Supper as the participants receive the bread and wine by faith during a church worship service.
- **Anglicans** generally believe in the spiritual presence of the Lord in the Lord's Supper as the participants receive the bread and wine by faith during a church worship service.
- **Methodists** also believe in the presence of Christ in the Lord's Supper but do not define the presence and say it is a mystery.
- **Assemblies of God Churches** teach the Lord's Supper is more than a mere symbolic act. They say, "*Because Pentecostalism focuses on the direct experience of the Holy Spirit, this sacrament takes on special significance, a one-on-one, tangible expression of the individual's relationship with God*".
- **Martin Luther and Lutheran Churches** teach that Jesus is physically present in and around the bread and wine as believers partake in the worship and communion service by faith in the preaching of God's word.
- **Bill Johnson, Senior Pastor of Bethel Church in Redding, California—a Charismatic Church**, teaches something similar to what Martin Luther taught. He also teaches healing and has seen remarkable healing during the Lord's Supper.

Huldrych Zwingli (1484-1531), the Swiss Reformer who lived during Luther's time, was a prominent leader who taught that the Lord's Supper was only a memorial and nothing else, based on Jesus' words, "Do this in remembrance of Me." The

General Baptists and some Pentecostal and Charismatic Churches believe this view.

But there's reason to believe that Zwingli changed his mind before he died (see Appendix-2).

7. Institution of the Lord's Supper

Introduction: The **Last Supper** was the Festival of the Passover that our Lord Jesus had with His disciples in the Upper Room on the night He was betrayed, as recorded in Luke 22. After this, the process of crucifixion took place. The Lord's Supper (Holy Communion) that we celebrate in the church today is based on Jesus's Last Supper or the Last Passover meal He had with His disciples. Therefore, we must learn about the Festival of the Passover, how Jesus had the Last Supper, and what it means for us to have the Lord's Supper.

Outline

1. Passover in Exodus 12 in Egypt (called the Egyptian Passover)
2. Annual Passover
3. Passover Meal, Last Supper and the Lord's Supper

1. Passover in Exodus 12 in Egypt (called the Egyptian Passover)

Exodus 12:1-3 The Jewish calendar is set with Passover as its first month (Nisan) — showing its importance. Passover instructions were only given to the Hebrew slaves in Egypt under the Pharaoh.

Exodus 12: 3-7 states that on the 10th day of Nisan, each Israelite household chose an unblemished one-year-old lamb. They observed the lamb for four days to check for any hidden defects. Every Israelite household killed the lamb on the 14th day of Nisan in the evening. They put some of the lamb's blood on the top and sides of the door frames of the household where the lamb was eaten. Marking the door frames with the lamb's blood was a sign of faith and obedience, as it protected against the destroying angel. If the household were small, they would invite neighbours to join them in consuming the lamb to avoid waste, as anything remaining was to be burnt (Exodus 12:10).

Please remember the following: In Exodus 12:8, it is specified that the lamb for the Passover meal should be roasted, not boiled, and eaten with bitter herbs and unleavened bread on the same night. These three elements (lamb, bitter herbs and unleavened bread) are crucial for the Passover meal. It takes a few hours to roast the lamb, and by then, it is past 6 pm, which, according to Jewish time, occurs on the next day — the 15th of Nisan. It's important to note that two separate events occur: the killing of the lamb on the 14th of Nisan afternoon and

the eating/celebrating of the Passover meal on the 15th of Nisan, known in a family setting as the seder meal on the 1st day of the Feast of Unleavened Bread.

Exodus 12:11 describes how the Israelites had to eat the Passover quickly because the Egyptians would soon discover that their firstborn sons had died. Pharaoh would demand that Moses and the Israelites leave Egypt. They didn't have time for the bread to rise, so it was unleavened, symbolising their hasty departure. Leaven is also used as a symbol of sin, corruption, and hypocrisy.

Exodus 12:13: The blood on the doorpost was applied only to the Egyptian Passover (the first Passover in Egypt) and not subsequent Passovers. The destroying angel killed the Egyptian's firstborn son only on that first Passover.

2. The Annual Passover (Exodus 12 v14, 17)

- (i) Every year, for generations to come, the Israelites were instructed to have a memorial to remember the event. They were no longer to put blood on the doorposts and should not eat in haste. Instead, they would recline, relax, and eat to celebrate freedom. Jesus and His disciples reclined at the table during the Lord's Supper (Luke 22:14).
- (ii) **Killing the Passover lamb** was done in the household after the Exodus till a Temple was built in Jerusalem. After that, the lamb was killed in the Temple as given in Deut 16:2, "*And you shall offer the Passover sacrifice to the LORD your God, from the flock or the herd, at the place that the LORD will choose, to make his name dwell there.*" [The lambs were sacrificed in the Temple during Jesus' time. After the destruction of the Temple, the Jews no longer sacrifice a lamb, but they share only a part of the lamb's leg, called a shank, at the Passover meal in the family].
- (iii) **The three vital elements**—Every Passover meal must have **roasted lamb**, **bitter herbs** and **unleavened bread**. The unleavened bread (Hebrew—matzah) is called the bread of affliction. It signifies the affliction of slavery and the hasty departure from Egypt. The bitter herbs made of horseradish (strong 'Mulla' in Hindi) have a sharp, pungent, bitter taste that guarantees to bring tears to your eyes. The idea was that every generation celebrating the Passover meal must identify with the bitter years of slavery in Egypt.
- (iv) **A commentary would accompany the seder meal** given in Exodus 12:26-27, "*And when your children say to you, 'What do you mean by this service?' you shall say, 'It is the sacrifice of the LORD's Passover, for he passed over the houses of the people of Israel in Egypt when he struck the Egyptians but*

spared our houses." Also, in Exodus 13:8, "You shall tell your son on that day, 'It is because of what the LORD did **for me** when I came out of Egypt.'" (Note: "**For me**" makes it personal).

The commentary was later simplified to 4 questions:

- On all other nights, we eat leavened bread and unleavened bread; on this night, we eat only unleavened bread. Why? (**Answer:** Unleavened bread, called the bread of affliction, signifies affliction in Egypt and haste in leaving it. Leaven also represents the **sin** we must leave behind in our new life of freedom).
- On all other nights, we eat all kinds of herbs; on this night, we eat only bitter herbs. Why? (**Answer:** To remember the bitterness of slavery)
- On all other nights, we do not dip the hyssop even once; on this night, we dip twice. Why? (**Answer:** First, dip in salt water to remember dipping the hyssop in blood (salty) and tears in Egypt. Second dipping in bitter herbs to remember bitter slavery in Egypt)
- On all other nights, we eat either sitting or reclining; on this night, we eat only reclining." Why? (**Answer:** To celebrate our freedom from slavery with ease and joy).

Through these four questions and answers, the father could retell the story of Exodus to his son (Exodus 12:26-27, 13:8).

Additional Traditions practised in the Seder Meal in 1st century BC-AD

Four cups of wine--The Mishna (oral traditions) teaches that these cups correspond to the four verbs describing God's redemption in Exodus 6:6-7.

*Exodus 6:6a: I will **bring you out** from under the yoke of the Egyptians*

*Exodus 6:6b: I will **free (deliver)** you from being slaves to them.*

*Exodus 6:6c: I will **redeem** you with an outstretched arm & with mighty acts of judgment*

*Exodus 6:7: I will **take you as my people**, and I will be your God*

The four cups divide the Passover meal into four parts. After each cup, the Jews praised God, saying, "May You be blessed, LORD our God, king of the world, who creates the fruit of the wine". [They don't bless the food, but they bless the LORD by thanking Him for His goodness]

The Passover meal shaped the identity of the Jews. It reminded them that they were a people whom God miraculously redeemed from slavery under Pharaoh and with whom God made a covenant to be their God, and they would be His people. The Passover meal is probably the oldest ritual meal in the world. The Jews still

eat it annually, 3500 years after the Exodus, which took place around 1500 BC. Over the years, many more traditions (e.g., afikomen) were added to the Seder Meal that differed in each Jewish community. **Likewise, the Lord's Supper shapes the identity of Christians; our Lord Jesus redeemed from slavery to Satan and sin.**

3. Passover Meal, Last Supper and the Lord's Supper

In several places in the Gospels, Jesus mentions that He would die. But when He wants to explain the meaning of His death, He chooses to bring it out in the Passover Meal, which He transforms with a whole new perspective. We call this transformed Passover meal the Last Supper. Therefore, we must understand the relationship between the Last Supper and the Passover Meal.

Let us examine Luke 22:7-21

Many Bible scholars say that Jesus celebrated the Passover Meal about 12-24 hours before Jews did so in Jerusalem because Jesus, our Passover Lamb, would soon be crucified on the Passover (Friday). To save time, he celebrated the Passover Meal on Thursday night/Friday morning around 01 a.m. on 14th Nisan.

In **Luke 22:9**, Jesus gives secret instructions to His trusted disciples (Peter and John) about the place of celebration to avoid detection by those trying to arrest Him through Judas, whom Jesus knew would betray Him. (Jesus told His disciples to look for a man carrying a water jar. That's easily noticeable because traditionally, a woman carries the water jar, not a man.)

Luke 22:14 The disciples recline around a low U-shaped table. [Note: Though it was a custom to recline and eat, it was to remember and **celebrate** their freedom from slavery in Egypt].

Luke 22:15-16 *And he said to them, "I have eagerly desired to eat this Passover with you before I suffer. ¹⁶ For I tell you, I will not eat it again until it finds **fulfilment** in the kingdom of God."*

At this point, the disciples would be perplexed because the Passover Meal was celebrating the Passover in Egypt—the past. But Jesus pointed to the future "**fulfilment**", — which begins with His crucifixion and resurrection in the next few days. It brings us out from under the yoke of sin, Satan, and death. But the complete **fulfilment** refers to the Messianic Banquet after the 2nd Coming (Rev 19:9). Jesus' death as the unblemished Passover Lamb (1Cor 5:7) is the perfect atoning sacrifice for believers. But it is only when He returns that we experience the full effect of His sacrifice on our behalf.

The Lord's Supper looks back to Jesus' death and also points forward to the complete fulfilment of His return. Whenever we partake of the Lord's Supper with faith, we proclaim the Lord's death until He comes (1 Cor 11:26).

The Passover meal in point 2 above has four movements marked by 4 cups of wine with four blessings.

Luke 22:17-18 After taking the cup, he thanked and said, "Take this and divide it among you. ¹⁸ For I tell you I will not drink again from the fruit of the vine until the kingdom of God comes."

This was the first cup, which involved giving thanks (Blessing after the cup). This cup meant, "I will bring you out from under the yoke of the Egyptians" (Exod 6:6). But Jesus transforms this to mean He will bring us out from under the yoke of sin, Satan, and death.

Usually, there would be a **commentary** (with questions) at this place. The Gospels don't mention this; instead, Jesus would teach the disciples. **After the commentary, they would drink the 2nd Cup of wine with the blessing** following. *Luke 22:19* And he took bread, gave thanks and broke it, and gave it to them, saying, "This **is** my body given **for you**; do this in **remembrance of me**."

This also shocks the disciples because Jesus takes a past symbol, unleavened bread (bread of affliction of suffering and slavery in Egypt), and Jesus points that to the future when He would suffer and die on the cross about 12 hours later—to set us free from slavery to sin. Catholics and Lutherans take this bread as the physical body of Christ, whereas most Protestant denominations take this bread as representing the body of Christ. Jesus says this bread is His body (broken on the cross) that would be given **for you** (whereas Exodus 13:8 says **for me**) because Jesus is the real Passover Lamb dying **for you**. The Passover was a constant reminder and proclamation of God's redemption of Israel from bondage in Egypt.

In the same way, the Lord's Supper that we celebrate today would be a continual reminder and proclamation of our deliverance from bondage to sin through Jesus' atoning sacrifice on the cross ("**do this in remembrance of me**").

What must we remember? The bread and cup aren't here to help you remember an event in the past. They are here to remind you that God's promise is true because Christ's death for your sins is as real as the bread you taste and the cup you drink. **That's what you're supposed to remember.**

Returning to the Last Supper, it would be time to eat the roasted lamb. But there was no roasted lamb on the table because the Passover in Jerusalem was yet to occur, and the lambs were not slaughtered in the Temple. Furthermore, Jesus, our Passover Lamb (1 Cor 5:7), was not yet crucified. Most Catholic and Protestant scholars agree on this. For example, Cardinal Ratzinger, later Pope Benedict, and Presbyterian Pastor Tim Keller, co-founder of The Gospel Coalition, said there was no lamb on the table. However, the Lamb of God (Jesus) presided at the table.

Luke 22:20 Similarly, after supper, he took the cup, saying, "This is the **new covenant in my blood**, which is poured out for you.

This is the third Cup—the cup of redemption (Exod 6:6c: *I will redeem you with an outstretched arm and mighty acts of judgment*). Once again, Jesus shocked the disciples with His interpretation—for this was no longer the blood of a little lamb but the blood of their Master—Jesus, who would shed His blood to redeem all humanity. They ended by singing Psalms 115-118.

Covenants are how God moves forward to redeem, save and relate with His people. All biblical covenants were ratified by blood sacrifice.

- In the Old Covenant (Testament), God rescues the Israelites from bondage to Pharaoh through the blood of the Passover Lamb. But the Old Testament prophets understood Israel's failure to obey God because of sinful hearts (Ps 51:5). They prayed for a greater deliverance (Ps 51:10-11) that pointed to a new covenant that God would make with people, equipping them with a new heart and a new spirit (Jer 31:31-34, 32:39, Ezk 11:19-20, 36:25-27).
- In the New Covenant, through the blood of the Lamb of God, our Lord Jesus, God rescues believers from all humanity's deeper bondage and slavery to sin, Satan, and death. This is **the gospel**—the good news!

The 4th cup is not mentioned at the Last Supper. Probably, there wasn't any because Jews rejected Jesus so that He couldn't say in Exodus 6:7 *I will take you as my people, and I will be your God*. But He will drink it with those who believe in Him when they sit with Him in the complete fulfilment of His Kingdom in the end times (Luke 22:29-30).

8. Three Aspects of the Lord's Supper in Mark's Gospel

Read Mark 14:12-31

This passage unveils three important aspects of our Lord Jesus and the Lord's Supper, each carrying significant spiritual weight.

1. Jesus is the Host of this Supper
2. Jesus is the Feast of the Supper
3. Jesus is the Covenant Keeper

1. Jesus is the Host of the Supper

We read some strange instructions that Jesus gave to His trusted disciples (Peter and John) in Mark 14:13-15 *"So he sent two of His disciples, telling them, "Go into the city, and a man carrying a jar of water will meet you. Follow him. ¹⁴ Say to the owner of the house he enters, 'The Teacher asks: Where is my guest room, where I may eat the Passover with my disciples?' ¹⁵ He will show you a large room upstairs, furnished and ready. Make preparations for us there."* The disciples could spot the man carrying a water jar because, traditionally, that was a woman's job. This is a **prearranged secret plan because** Jesus knew of Judas' betrayal and did not want Judas to sabotage the Last Supper, which Jesus was eager to share with His disciples (Luke 22:8, 15).

Jesus, knowing He would be betrayed, still chose to be the Host of the Supper.

When we approach the Lord's table, we should realise that Jesus invites us to a meal with Him. This is not an altar where another sacrifice must occur but the table of the Lord's Supper, where Jesus is the gracious host.

Psalm 23 has two parts. In the first part (vv 1-3), Jesus is our shepherd. But in the second part, Jesus is our host. Psalm 23:5 says, *'You prepare a table before me in the presence of my enemies. You anoint my head with oil; my cup overflows.'* As our host, Jesus invites us to a lavish banquet in the presence of our enemies, who are evil spirits. We may hear their voices speaking to our minds, but they cannot harm us because of the Lord's presence. As our host, the Lord protects us and shows His loving kindness towards us.

Every time we come to a worship service, which includes the Lord's Supper, we gather around the throne and worship Christ because He is worthy. He prepares a meal for us because we are His beloved through the New Covenant in

His blood. In this worship service, God is glorified, and we become more open to receiving His grace and being assured of His love for us. This is the significance of the Lord's Supper in our spiritual lives.

2. Jesus is the Feast of the Supper

But Jesus is not only our host; He is also our Feast. In Mark 14:22, He takes the bread, blesses it, breaks it, and gives it to them, and He says, "*Take it, for this is my body.*"

When the Jews celebrate the Passover meal today, they take the bread and say, "*This is the unleavened bread (also known as the bread of affliction) which our ancestors ate when they came from the land of Egypt.*" They certainly do not refer to the same bread their ancestors ate 3500 years ago. **Yet their bread was more than just a symbol.** As they ate the Passover meal their ancestors ate, they joined themselves to the Exodus redemption story when they departed from Egypt during the time of Moses. Likewise, when we eat the bread and drink the wine in the Lord's Supper, we enter by faith and join in what Christ has done on the cross for our redemption.

In the traditional Jewish Passover meal, the head of the family must give an interpretation at each step. When Jesus has the Last Supper as head of His family of disciples in the gospels, He says to them, "This bread is My body, and this cup is My blood, " — meaning, "I am the new and real bread from heaven. I am the new and real blood of the lamb of God." Jesus takes the central event in Israel's history, which is celebrated on their most holy day (the Passover), and He makes it all about Himself. He is the true Passover Lamb (1 Cor 5:7).

When we gather around the table of Lord's Supper, we participate in a new Exodus story—an Exodus from the power of sin and death, which held us in bondage. Jesus's death and resurrection set us free fully and finally. He laid out a feast and said, "I am your host, and I'm the feast you can feed by faith in Me because My body and blood were given for you." **When we participate in faith, we must expect the power of the Lord to be sufficient to free us from any bondage to sin.**

When we eat the bread given in the Lord's Supper, **by faith**, we feed on the true bread of life (John 6:35). We say to ourselves that Jesus is all we need, and apart from Him, we have no good thing. As we look around the Lord's table, we see our brothers and sisters in Christ partaking from the same loaf of bread, and we

rejoice and delight in them (Ps 16:2-3). We truly celebrate as the Body of Christ, the Church, in the spiritual presence of our Lord Jesus. It points to the future when we will see our Lord Jesus face to face and celebrate with Him in the Marriage Supper of the Lamb (Rev 21:2-4) — where every pain in our lives will be gone forever. No more emptiness and no more heartache. We dwell with God, and we are His people. And with Him, we are completely satisfied.

Rev 21:2-4 I saw the Holy City, the new Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, prepared as a bride beautifully dressed for her husband. ³ And I heard a loud voice from the throne saying, "Look! God's dwelling place is now among the people, and he will dwell with them. They will be his people, and God himself will be with them and be their God. ⁴ He will wipe every tear from their eyes. There will be no more death or mourning or crying or pain, for the old order of things has passed away."

This is our hope — the joyful anticipation of a certainty. So, when you eat the Lord's Supper in your church, remember with confidence that Jesus is unconditionally committed to getting you from where you are seated in the church to where you will be physically seated with Him and see Him face to face in the New Heaven and Earth. Between now and then, you live by grace, allowing this joyful hope to shape your life on earth.

3. Jesus is the Covenant Keeper

Jesus also shows us He is the covenant keeper in the midst of covenant betrayal. In his gospel, Mark uses a peculiar literary device that scholars call the "Markan Sandwich". There are seven such sandwiches (Mark 5:21-43, 6:7-30, 11:13-31, 14:1-11, 14:17-31, 14:53-72, 15:40-16:8). The pattern is the outer two sets of verses magnify the middle verses that highlight the point that Jesus wants to make. For example, in Mark 11:13-31, Jesus curses the fig tree (11:13-14). Then He enters Jerusalem and cleanses the Temple (11:15-18). Then Jesus revisited the fig tree, which had withered (11:20-21). We can see a pattern like a sandwich—the outer two sets of verses are fig tree (11:13-14) and fig tree (11:20-21). In the middle (11:15-18), Jesus cleanses the Temple, showing that the Temple had become like a fruitless fig tree that was cursed and would wither away.

In Mark 14, we have another sandwich showing Jesus keeping the covenant (14:24), mentioned in the middle of Judas (14:17-21) and Peter (14:27-31), both of whom betray Him. This sandwich shows Jesus, the covenant-keeper Messiah, shining brightly in the darkness He faced with His covenant-breaking disciples.

In the Last Supper, in the midst of betrayal, Jesus says, *"This is my blood of the covenant (Mark 14:24)."* The blood was a sign and seal of the New Covenant.

The Old Covenant was ratified in *Exodus 24:8*. Moses then took the blood, sprinkled it on the people, and said, *"This is the blood of the covenant that the Lord has made with you in accordance with all these words."*

The blood of the covenant was like the signing and stamping of a document that made it legal in a court of law. Now Jesus would say to us, "It won't be blood from a lamb but the blood from your Messiah that will ratify all of your blessings and will assure to you the reality of all that is promised in the New Covenant of grace, that you would be His people and He would be your **God and will never stop doing good to you.**

*Jer 32:38-41 They will be my people, and I will be their God. ³⁹ I will give them singleness of heart and action so that they will always fear me and that all will then go well for them and for their children after them. ⁴⁰ I will make an everlasting covenant with them: **I will never stop doing good to them, and I will inspire them to fear me so that they will never turn away from me. ⁴¹ I will rejoice in doing them good and will assuredly plant them in this land with all my heart and soul.***

In the Last Supper, Jesus offered His disciples the cup of redemption, which signified the blood of the covenant. He could do it because He would drink the Cup of Judgment on our behalf. Soon after the Last Supper, Jesus went to the Garden of Gethsemane and prayed, "Abba, Father," He said, *"Everything is possible for you. Take this cup from me. Yet not what I will, but what you will"* (Mark 14:36).

Jesus would say to us, "I'll give you the cup, the blood of the covenant, the cup of redemption — because I have drunk a different cup, the cup of judgment on your behalf. And I will be the covenant-keeping Messiah in the midst of all of your covenant betrayal."

Christ serves us as host; He becomes the feast for us, and then He gives His life as a ransom for many to be the covenant keeper in the midst of our covenant betrayal. This is how Jesus reaches out to us when we partake in the Lord's Supper.

9. What does it mean to eat the Lord's Supper in an unworthy manner?

1 Cor 11:17-32 In the following directives, I have no praise for you, for your meetings do more harm than good. ¹⁸ In the first place, I hear that when you come together as a church, there are divisions among you, and to some extent, I believe it. ¹⁹ No doubt there must be differences among you to show which of you have God's approval. ²⁰ When you come together, it is not the Lord's Supper you eat, ²¹ for as you eat, each of you goes ahead without waiting for anybody else. One remains hungry; another gets drunk. ²² Don't you have homes to eat and drink in? Or do you despise the church of God and humiliate those who have nothing? What shall I say to you? Shall I praise you for this? Certainly not!

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 Therefore, 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 A man ought to **examine himself** before he eats of the bread and drinks of the cup. ²⁹ For anyone who eats and drinks without **recognising the body of the Lord** eats and drinks judgment on himself. ³⁰ That is why many among you are weak and sick, and a number of you have fallen asleep. ³¹ But if we judged ourselves, we would not come under judgment. ³² When we are judged by the Lord, we are being disciplined so that we will not be condemned with the world.*

Outline

1. Early Church Context & Present Context
2. Three ways to respect the Body of Christ
 - (a) Value the Bread that is distributed in the Lord's Supper
 - (b) Value the Church Members with the same value as the Bread
 - (c) Examine yourself before partaking in the Lord's Supper

1. Early Church Context: In the early church, believers met in homes to partake in the Lord's Supper (Acts 4:48). As the numbers grew, they met in the large homes of wealthy believers. They brought food to share with the congregation and ate together like a love feast. Later, they would partake in the Lord's Supper. However, the wealthy believers, having more time to spare, would eat and drink the food they brought before the poorer believers could come only after their working hours, leaving the latter hungry. Paul criticised such inconsiderate group differences between the rich and the poor in the church (1 Cor 11:18,21), especially since they would be partaking of the Lord's Supper. Such differences would do more harm than good (1 Cor 11:17). This is important.

The Lord's Supper creates a Christian community. Our divisions and differences ought to melt as we eat the Lord's Supper together, focusing on the cross and in the spiritual presence of our Lord and Saviour, Jesus Christ, through the Holy Spirit.

Paul was offended by what happened in the Corinthian church. Instead of *melting away* their divisions, their meals made their divisions evident. So Paul rebukes them, saying, *"I have no praise for you, for your meetings do more harm than good."*¹⁸ *In the first place, I hear that when you come together as a church, there are divisions among you, and to some extent, I believe it."* (1 Cor 11:17-18).

Present Context: Today, we have church buildings where we attend worship services and partake in the Lord's Supper. We don't bring food from home to share in our church services, so our context is different. But the principles of respecting the Body of Christ will remain the same. **Do divisions exist in the church today?** I think they do. Partaking of the Lord's Supper will constantly challenge us to form a community with diverse people of different backgrounds. In India, we are also faced with centuries-old rigid caste traditions. But every culture in the world has its ungodly traditions because we are all fallen people.

Divisions in the world will always exist because we cannot see the worth of a human being made in God's image. Now, this image is fractured by the sin and selfishness of fallen humanity.

However, **divisions in the church will exist** only when the gospel is not working in the members' lives. I believe Paul hinted at this in 1 Cor 11:9, *"No doubt there have to be differences among you to show which of you have God's approval."* We can only receive God's approval when we believe what His Son has done for us on

the cross. So, the only difference that matters is between those who believe the gospel, allowing it to work in them, renewing the fractured image into Christlikeness and those who resist the gospel in their life. Ultimately, the difference is between those whom Christ nourishes in the Lord's Supper and those who eat and drink judgment on themselves (1 Cor 11:27-30)

2. Three simultaneous ways to respect the Body of Christ.

(a) We must value the bread distributed in the Lord's Supper. The Holy Spirit is the Spirit of Christ (Rom 8:9), whom Jesus says will take what is His and make it known to you (John 16:14). In the Lord's Supper service, the Holy Spirit shines on what Christ has done for you. The Holy Spirit bridges the gap between Christ, who sits on the Father's right hand in heaven, and you, who sits on earth. Christ speaks to you through the Holy Spirit, saying, *"I love you so much that I gave My life for you. This bread you hold in your hand means My body was given for you to make you whole. And this wine means My blood poured out for you for the forgiveness of your sins. That's how much I love you"*. And we open our hearts to Jesus and say to Him, *"O Lord, I open my heart to you. Come in and dine with me"*. So, God's undeserved love (grace), His presence and His power flow to us in the Lord's Supper through the comforting presence of the Holy Spirit.

It holds no significance if you receive the bread with a blank mind and no faith. You miss God's grace and presence accompanying the Lord's Supper. Then the bread is just bread to you. Nothing more.

Sursum Corda: To help draw you into the Lord's Supper with faith, churches since the third century followed a liturgy at the beginning of the Lord's Supper called "Sursum Corda" (Latin words, meaning "Lift up your heart"). Here, the minister says, *"Lift up your hearts,"*. Congregation response: *"We lift them up to the Lord"*. Minister: *"Let us give thanks to the Lord."* Congregation: *"It is right to give Him thanks and praise."*

Many sixteenth reformers retained the sursum corda but modified it without the liturgical response. Calvin's sursum corda was, *"Lift up our minds by faith above all things worldly and sensible, and thereby to enter into heaven, that we may find, and receive Christ."* The idea of the sursum corda was only one thing: value the bread and wine distributed in the Lord's Supper because they were a means of connecting with Christ.

Many evangelical churches today have discontinued saying the *sursum corda*, but the essence remains the same — don't take the bread lightly. **Be in awe of the sacrament that Christ commands us to observe. Connect with Him by faith.** The bread signifies that His body was broken so we might become whole. If you fail to discern this, your sicknesses could have been healed but weren't, leading to avoidable death (1 Cor 11:30).

(b) We must value the members around us with the same respect as we would for the bread we hold in the Lord's Supper. So I look around the congregation, the Body of Christ I am part of. Jesus died for each one of them. And if I don't hold them with the utmost respect, I don't hold Jesus too with the utmost respect. Any feeling of superiority and unforgiveness must evaporate during and after the Lord's Supper, or else it grieves the Lord Jesus, and we are judged by Him (1 Cor 11:28).

Paul rebuked the Corinthian Church because of the uncaring attitudes of the rich towards the poor (1 Cor 11:17-22).

(c) We must examine ourselves before taking the Lord's Supper. This self-examination is not about deep introspection because *the heart is deceitful above all things and beyond cure. Who can understand it?* (Jer 17:9). Instead, you must live as an open book before the Lord. It means you don't make peace with unconfessed sins, even repeated ones. Confess them to the Lord with **a sincere resolve** to get rid of them. Eventually, God's grace will enable you to live righteously. On the other hand, make sure you don't take credit for any godliness that you find in yourself but acknowledge that only God's grace enabled you to overcome sin.

Here are some scriptures that I found helpful:

Mic 6:8 He has showed you, O man, what is good. And what does the Lord require of you? To act justly, love mercy, and walk humbly with your God.

Matt 5:3-7 "Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven. 4 Blessed are those who mourn, for they will be comforted. 5 Blessed are the meek, for they will inherit the earth. 6 Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, for they will be filled. 7 Blessed are the merciful, for they will be shown mercy.

Matt 5:21-24 "You have heard that it was said to the people long ago, 'Do not murder, and anyone who murders will be subject to judgment.'²² But I tell you

that anyone who is angry with his brother will be subject to judgment. Again, anyone who says to his brother, 'Raca,' is answerable to the Sanhedrin. But anyone who says, 'You fool!' will be in danger of the fire of hell. ²³ "Therefore, if you are offering your gift at the altar and there remember that your brother has something against you, ²⁴ leave your gift there in front of the altar. First go and be reconciled to your brother; then come and offer your gift.

Isa 66:2 This is the one I esteem: he who is humble and contrite in spirit, and trembles at my word.

Isa 57:15 For this is what the high and lofty One says — he who lives forever, whose name is holy: "I live in a high and holy place, but also with him who is contrite and lowly in spirit, to revive the spirit of the lowly and to revive the heart of the contrite.

Joel 2:13 Rend your heart and not your garments. Return to the Lord your God, for he is gracious and compassionate, slow to anger and abounding in love, and he relents from sending calamity.

Isa 1:18-20 "Come now, let us reason together," says the Lord. "Though your sins are like scarlet, they shall be as white as snow; though they are red as crimson, they shall be like wool. ¹⁹ If you are willing and obedient, you will eat the best from the land; ²⁰ but if you resist and rebel, you will be devoured by the sword." For the mouth of the Lord has spoken.

10. The Lord's Supper Shapes Our Lives

Outline

1. The Lord's Supper shapes our Identity
2. The Lord's Supper shapes us to be Grateful
3. The Lord's Supper shapes our Worship
4. The Lord's Supper shapes our Desires and Expectations
5. The Lord's Supper shapes our Service
6. The Lord's Supper shapes our Life in the World

1. The Lord's Supper shapes our Identity

The Lord's Supper shapes our identity because the meal, at its core, is based on and fulfils the Passover. The Passover was an annual ritual feast during which the Jews, until today, celebrate God's saving action in the Exodus story (Exodus 12) when He liberated the Israelites by the blood of a lamb from cruel slavery under Pharaoh around 1500 BC. God also declared that by saving them, the Jews would be His people, and He would be their God (Exodus 6:6-7). Every time Jews celebrate the Passover Festival, they identify with the Exodus generation as God's chosen people.

When Jesus celebrated the Passover with His disciples the night He was betrayed before His death, He did far more than identify with the Exodus generation. Jesus transformed the Passover meal, giving it greater significance. He was about to accomplish His mission as the true Passover Lamb that liberated those who believe in Him from slavery to sin and Satan and death. Just as the historical Exodus and Old Covenant defined Israel's existence, Christ acted out a new Exodus and a New Covenant that now defines our existence in Him. Jesus' transformed Passover meal with His disciples is called the Last Supper. And He commanded His followers to participate in that transformed meal as often as we do in remembrance of Him (Luke 22:19, 1 Cor 11:24-25) — which we call the Lord's Supper (or Holy Communion or Eucharist).

Many today think that remembering is merely thinking about something from the past. But biblically, remembering involves bringing the past into the present and allowing the past to shape the present actively. So, when we remember Christ in the Supper, we do not think about someone absent and disconnected from us. Instead, by faith, we identify with and are shaped by Christ, who is with us—indeed, *in us*.

Tim Keller puts it this way: The opposite of remembering is dismembering, as when body parts are disconnected. So, when we remember Christ in the Lord's Supper, we realise that we are grafted into Him and are vitally connected to Him like branches are vitally connected to the Vine — drawing life from Him and being transformed into His likeness. As the people around us partake of the same loaf of bread and cup of wine, we see ourselves as the New Covenant people of God, all connected as branches to the Vine, Jesus, who saved us from slavery to sin and Satan. We rejoice in the Lord's Supper. We belong to Him and are being made to be like Him.

By sharing this meal, we declare to ourselves and one another that we belong to Christ and each other. This Lord's Supper binds us together by sharing the same bread and wine. Even though we retain our God-given personality, we are not isolated individuals working out our future apart from belonging to the Lord and His people. We are joined to the Lord Almighty, who has a rightful claim on our lives and, indeed, on all creation. We belong to the body of Christ, the community of faith that shapes us and proclaims Jesus to the world by our lifestyle.

2. The Lord's Supper shapes us to be Grateful

The story of the Bible is God reaching to humanity in love. God's love for humanity is demonstrated on the cross when God, becoming man, gives Himself to redeem us from sin, Satan and death. When we see Jesus on the cross, we see God's self-giving love for sinful and rebellious humans. And all we can do is believe in Him and give Him thanks. When we partake of the Lord's Supper, we partake of God's self-giving love in Jesus Christ and respond in awe and thanksgiving. In some Christian denominations, the Lord's Supper is called the "Eucharist", which comes from the Greek meaning "giving thanks". The term 'Eucharist' is used to emphasise the act of thanksgiving and the celebration of God's grace in the sacrament of the Lord's Supper.

As we regularly partake of the Lord's Supper with faith and understanding, we are gradually shaped to become grateful and gracious people. Experiencing God's generosity in this sacrament will free us from needing to hold on to what we possess. As we regularly partake of the Lord's Supper, we gradually learn these attitudes of generosity and grace when dealing with our fellow men, irrespective of whether or not they are believers.

3. The Lord's Supper shapes our Worship

As I said earlier, when we partake of the Lord's Supper, we partake of God's self-giving love in Jesus Christ and respond in awe and thanksgiving. His love touches your heart by the Holy Spirit. Then, we begin to love Him more and more and more despite the challenges and trials in our lives. Jesus' love melts our hearts, and we begin to love Him in response. We love because He first loved us (1 John 4:19). Then, our love for Him starts pushing out our love for sin. It pushes out of our hearts all types of sin, big or small — selfishness, pride, greed, lust, anger, unforgiveness, gossip, stinginess, unkindness, impatience, etc. (We see them in others, but we skip seeing them in ourselves). This beholding Jesus and yielding to Him must accompany our partaking in the Lord's Supper. And when we gladly yield to Him out of love, we will find His commandments are no longer burdensome to us (1 John 5:3 *In fact, this is love for God: to keep his commands. His commands are not burdensome*). And this is worship. It allows God's self-giving love to change our hearts from selfishness to worship.

4. The Lord's Supper shapes our Desires and Expectations

This is truly important. Many people suffer hurting rejection in their lives, which causes them to be angry and suffer poor self-image. Some work hard to be accepted but only receive rejection instead. Others worry and expect bad things to happen. Many believing Christians suffer rejection, and many worry. Jesus was the most rejected person in history. He suffered rejection from His mother's womb as people thought of Him as an illegitimate child. And throughout His life, He suffered rejection by the Jews. Even His disciples abandoned Him at the cross. Yet Jesus never displayed any fruits of rejection and always trusted His Father in everything. Despite rejection, Jesus led a victorious life, giving us the power to live in victory.

Luke 22:19-20 And he took bread, gave thanks and broke it, and gave it to them, saying, "This is my body given for you; do this in remembrance of me."

²⁰ *In the same way, after the supper he took the cup, saying, "This cup is the **new covenant** in my blood, which is poured out for you.*

When we partake of the Lord's Supper, we also partake of the blessings of the New Covenant, which, besides forgiveness of our sins, promises that God will never stop doing good to all who believe in Him and that instead of the curses, we deserve, He will bless us.

Jer 32:38-41 They will be my people, and I will be their God. ³⁹ I will give them singleness of heart and action so that they will always fear me and that all

will then go well for them and for their children after them. ⁴⁰ I will make an everlasting covenant with them: I will never stop doing good to them, and I will inspire them to fear me so that they will never turn away from me. ⁴¹ I will rejoice in doing them good and will assuredly plant them in this land with all my heart and soul.

Gal 3:13-14 Christ redeemed us from the curse of the law by becoming a curse for us, for it is written: "Cursed is everyone who is hung on a tree." ¹⁴ He redeemed us in order that the blessing given to Abraham might come to the Gentiles through Christ Jesus, so that by faith we might receive the promise of the Spirit.

Proverbs 10:24, below, reminds us that our expectations may shape our lives more than we realise. Those who worry constantly never run out of things to worry about and often find their worries valid. Those who believe God answers prayer frequently experience answers. Those who expect to see God's goodness usually do.

Proverbs 10:24 What the wicked dread will overtake them; what the righteous desire will be granted.

When we draw close to Him in the Lord's Supper by faith in what Jesus has done for us, He plants in us the assurance of His desire to bless us. We begin to expect good things to happen, and it happens. But when people insist on their unbelief in God's goodness, He also honours their wishes and leaves them to worry and dread. Much of what we receive from God is realised based on our faith. If we live in unbelief, what we dread may happen. But if we do have faith, we experience God's blessings.

4. The Lord's Supper shapes our Service

Luke 22:24-30 A dispute also arose among them as to which of them was considered to be greatest. ²⁵ Jesus said to them, "The kings of the Gentiles lord it over them; and those who exercise authority over them call themselves Benefactors. ²⁶ But you are not to be like that. Instead, the greatest among you should be like the youngest, and the one who rules like the one who serves. ²⁷ For who is greater, the one who is at the table or the one who serves? Is it not the one who is at the table? But I am among you as one who serves. ²⁸ You are those who have stood by me in my trials. ²⁹ And I confer on you a kingdom, just as my Father conferred one on me, ³⁰ so that you may eat and drink at my table in my kingdom and sit on thrones, judging the twelve tribes of Israel.

In Luke 22, Jesus instituted the Lord's Supper. Soon after He shares the bread and wine, the disciples start arguing about who is the greatest. Jesus responds by pointing them back to the Supper: "*For who is greater, the one who is at the table or the one who serves? Is it not the one who is at the table? But I am among you as one who serves.*" (Luke 22:27). Every time we partake of the Lord's Supper, we are reminded that the King of the universe is not being served but is serving. And the bread and wine point us to the cross, the moment when the One who was equal with God "*humbled himself by becoming obedient to death—even death on a cross!*" (Phil 2:8). Every time we take the Supper, we remember the servant King and serve one another, and as a result, humility and service gradually make their home in us. Jesus goes on: "*And I confer on you a kingdom, just as my Father conferred one on me,³⁰ so that you may eat and drink at my table in my kingdom and sit on thrones, judging the twelve tribes of Israel,*" (Luke 22:29-30). The Supper points us to the great eternal banquet of the Messiah. There is no need to fight for positions of honour when you can see yourself seated with the King. At the Lord's Supper, we learn service from the King Himself.

5. The Lord's Supper shapes our Life in the World

God created the world of beauty and wonder out of love. And God created humanity in His image to rule the earth as His representatives—a people of grace and generosity like Himself. After the Fall of man, humanity turned to selfishness and greed. But God sent His Son to redeem humanity by His self-giving life to restore grace and generosity and bring His new creation into existence. **And at the centre of His new creation is the Lord's Table, given to us as a symbol and sign of God's redeeming grace.** The moment we partake of the bread and wine, we encounter grace. But this moment must remind us that God always looks at the world with grace. It must remind us that God is not far away and distant, but in the Lord's Supper, He is Emmanuel—God with us. And He constantly transforms us by His grace as we partake of the Lord's Supper.

In the Lord's Supper, **we proclaim the Lord's death until He comes** (1 Cor 11:26). We proclaim that our Lord Jesus is on the throne of the universe, and the devil is defeated. We proclaim that Jesus is Lord, and Jesus loves every single believer, which, of course, includes you and me. The Lord's Supper is a real-life drama in which we act out the story of Jesus.

- We act out what happened in history in the death and resurrection of Jesus.

- We act out what is happening as Christ welcomes us into His presence.
- We act out what will happen at the end of history when the bride of Christ feasts with the Bridegroom.

This shaping of our character happens more than we realise. But it is not automatic. We need to be sincere. Word and sacrament belong together and are bound together by our faith. Then, they become meaningful and powerful, entering our lives' hidden areas and redeeming them. We must participate sincerely, wanting our Lord to transform us into His likeness. We go out into the world as men and women, encouraged, enriched and equipped to touch the world with love, grace and the truth of the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ.

11. Sacraments and Church — 1 (Communal Aspect)

Introduction

Believers can commune with God individually through various means, such as prayer, Bible reading, worship, and meditation on the scriptures. However, the unique communal nature of Baptism and the Lord's Supper sets them apart. Unlike other forms of worship, these sacraments cannot be performed in isolation. Baptism is the sacrament that brings the Church into existence, and the Lord's Supper sustains its communal life, thereby knitting together the community life of the Church.

Outline

1. Baptism and the Church
2. The Lord's Supper and the Church

1. Baptism and the Church

On the day of Pentecost, after Peter preached to the crowd, *"Those who accepted his message were baptised, and about three thousand were added to their number that day. (Acts 2:41).* To be baptised is to be added to the church. This pattern is repeated throughout the book of Acts.

The church is a *baptised people*. Just as the Israelites passed through the waters of the Red Sea and were baptised into Moses (1 Cor 10:2), the church passed through the waters of baptism into Christ.

1 Cor 10:2 They were all baptised into Moses in the cloud and in the sea.

Gal 3:26-28: So in Christ Jesus you are all children of God through faith,²⁷ for all of you who were baptised into Christ have clothed yourselves with Christ.²⁸ There is neither Jew nor Gentile, neither slave nor free, nor is there male and female, for you are all one in Christ Jesus. [Clothed with Christ means in union with Christ].

Note: The term *baptised into Moses* indicates the Israelites' oneness and solidarity with Moses as their leader.

Our worldly identities and loyalties are submerged in the baptismal waters, and their hold on us is broken. We emerge from baptism with new identities and allegiance (oneness and solidarity) to Christ and His people. The sacrament of baptism is more than just a symbolic act because it's a seal of our allegiance and

union with Christ, just as a marriage ceremony is like a seal between husband and wife.

Passing through the Red Sea was a defining moment for the Israelites. They saw the drowning and total defeat of the mighty Egyptian army, who oppressed them under Pharaoh for about 400 years. Likewise, baptism is our defining moment because the hold of the devil is broken over us. It defines us as a people of God under our Saviour and Lord Jesus Christ.

The Church is one body because we share, among other things, one baptism that signifies our allegiance to Christ.

Eph 4:3-4 Make every effort to keep the unity of the Spirit through the bond of peace. ⁴ There is one body and one Spirit, just as you were called to one hope when you were called;

There is only one door into the church—the sacrament of baptism.

You do not become a member of the church when your name is added to a membership list. The list will only be for administrative and legal purposes. **You become a member of the church when you are baptised.** Suppose you are moving to another city and you have already been baptised. In that case, you start being part of a new church when you take the Lord's Supper there because the Lord's Supper is how we express our ongoing belonging to the church.

(For further notes on the Purpose & Significance of Baptism, refer to **Chapter 3**)

2. The Lord's Supper and the Church

Just as baptism is a community-forming act, so is the Lord's Supper. The Lord's Supper is an act of communion with Christ (as we saw in **Chapter 6**), but it is also an act of communion with one another. In the Lord's Supper, we act out community.

Indeed, the community and the Lord's Supper are created by one another. The community creates the Supper because the bread and wine would be just that without the community. Even a beautifully decorated table with bread and wine is still not the Lord's Supper. It becomes the Lord's Supper only when people gather around the table in worship. The bread and wine take on meaning in the context of the community of faith. **This is why you cannot take Communion on your own.**

At the same time, the Supper creates the community. Consider Paul's words in 1 Cor 10:17: "**Because there is one loaf, we, who are many, are one body, for we**

all share the one loaf." Why are we one body? Because we all share the one loaf. How does this diverse group of people from various generations, ethnic backgrounds, and social classes come together to form one church? How can a group of individuals—"we, who are many," as Paul puts it—with different priorities and personalities share a common life? How is it that your church, with all its differences and difficulties, functions as a family? **Because we all share the one loaf.**

At an objective level, what creates a Christian community is the death and resurrection of Jesus. Paul says, "*Husbands love your wives as Christ loved the church and gave himself up for her*" (Eph 5:25). Christ did not die to collect an assortment of detached individuals. He died to create and redeem the church. Individuals are saved when, by faith, they become part of the people for whom Christ died. In Ephesians 2, Paul describes how the cross has broken down the dividing wall of hostility between Jews and Gentiles. We are humbled by the cross so that any social superiority dissolves. The old loyalties of race, class, and gender are replaced by our new identity as *God's family*. That is at an objective level. Through the cross, we are a family. It's a fact. Nothing we do can add to or subtract from this reality.

However, the church does not always *feel* like a family. After all, we remain a diverse group of individuals with different backgrounds, generations, and personalities. Inevitably, tensions arise. But as we share the Lord's Supper, the Holy Spirit draws us to see each member of the Church as redeemed and loved by Christ and partaking **of the one loaf**. The Lord's Supper helps us feel like a family and helps us live as a family.

Therefore, at a subjective level, the Lord's Supper creates a Christian community. Our divisions and differences begin to melt as we eat the Lord's Supper together, focusing on the cross and in the spiritual presence of our Lord and Saviour, Jesus Christ, through the Holy Spirit.

That is why Paul was offended by what happened in the Corinthian church. Instead of *melting away* their divisions, their Communion meals made their divisions evident. So Paul rebukes them, saying, "*I have no praise for you, for your meetings do more harm than good.*"¹⁸ *In the first place, I hear that when you come together as a church, there are divisions among you, and to some extent, I believe it.*" (1 Cor 11:17-18).

Do divisions exist in the church today? I think they do. Partaking of the Lord's Supper will constantly challenge us to form a community with diverse people of different backgrounds. In India, we are also faced with centuries-old rigid caste traditions. But every culture in the world has its ungodly traditions because we are all fallen people.

Divisions in the world will always exist because we cannot see the worth of a human being made in the image of God but now an image that is fractured by the sinfulness and selfishness of fallen humanity. However, **divisions in the church will exist** only when the gospel is not working in the members' lives. I believe Paul hinted at this in 1 Cor 11:9, "*No doubt there have to be differences among you to show which of you have God's approval.*" We can only receive God's approval when we believe what His Son has done for us on the cross. So, the only difference that matters is between those who believe the gospel, allowing it to work in them, renewing the fractured image into Christlikeness and those who resist the gospel in their life. Ultimately, the difference is between those whom Christ nourishes in the Lord's Supper and those who eat and drink judgment on themselves (1 Cor 11:27-30)

1 Cor 11:27-30 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. ³⁰ That is why many among you are weak and sick, and a number of you have fallen asleep.

So, the Lord's Supper proclaims the death of Jesus not just through the symbolism of bread and wine but also through the effect it creates: the family of God eating together as a sign of the new creation in Christ and growing together in Christlikeness.

12. Sacraments and Church — 2 (Kingdom Aspect)

Introduction

When Peter confesses that Jesus is the Christ, Jesus replied:

Matt 16:17-19 "Blessed are you, Simon son of Jonah, for this was not revealed to you by flesh and blood but by my Father in heaven. ¹⁸ And I tell you that you are Peter, and on this rock, I will build my church, and the gates of Hades will not overcome it. ¹⁹ I will give you the keys of the kingdom of heaven; whatever you bind on earth will be bound in heaven, and whatever you loose on earth will be loosed in heaven."

Jesus gave the church **the keys of the kingdom** and the power to bind and loose. This means the church has the authority to make decisions that align with God's will. It is a strong statement, for it says that what happens on earth, as the church decides, affects what happens in heaven.

Outline

1. Keys of the Kingdom and Proclaiming the Gospel
2. Keys of the Kingdom and Church Discipline
3. Keys of the Kingdom are linked to the Sacraments
4. Sacraments are linked together to Church life

1. Keys of the Kingdom and Proclaiming the Gospel

John 20:21-23 Again, Jesus said, "Peace be with you! As the Father has sent me, I am sending you." ²² And with that, he breathed on them and said, "Receive the Holy Spirit. ²³ If you forgive anyone's sins, their sins are forgiven; if you do not forgive them, they are not forgiven."

These verses do not give the authority to Christians to forgive sins. However, a Christian can boldly declare that a person's sins are forgiven by the Father because of the work of His Son only if the person has repented and believed in the gospel. (Since the disciples did not receive the Holy Spirit until the day of Pentecost, some 40 days later, we must understand that verse 22 above is a pledge by Jesus that the Holy Spirit would come and empower them).

Our Spirit-empowered preaching of the gospel can affect a person's eternal destiny. Their **sins are forgiven** if they respond to our gospel proclamation with faith and repentance. But their **sins are not forgiven** if they reject our proclamation. [*Sins are forgiven, and sins are not forgiven* — but by whom? By

God and no one else] As we talk about Jesus and His gospel with people around us, we deal with their eternal destinies. In John 20:21-23, we learn that the power of the keys of the kingdom is exercised through gospel proclamation. How people respond to the gospel on earth affects what happens in heaven.

2. Keys of the Kingdom and Church Discipline

Matt 18:15-20 "If your brother or sister sins, go and point out their fault, just between the two of you. If they listen to you, you have won them over. ¹⁶ But if they will not listen, take one or two others along, so that 'every matter may be established by the testimony of two or three witnesses' ¹⁷ If they still refuse to listen, tell it to the church; and if they refuse to listen even to the church, treat them as you would a pagan or a tax collector. ¹⁸ "Truly I tell you, whatever you bind on earth will be bound in heaven, and whatever you loose on earth will be loosed in heaven. ¹⁹ "Again, truly I tell you that if two of you on earth agree about anything they ask for, it will be done for them by my Father in heaven. ²⁰ For where two or three gather in my name, there am I with them."

In Matt 18:15-20, Jesus describes church discipline as being carried out with gentleness, patience, and gradual escalation. Only at the last resort does He command excommunication. We often use the promise of His presence given in verses 19-20 when our prayer meetings are low in numbers. But that promise is given when church elders meet to enforce church discipline. Then verse 18 says, "Whatever you bind on earth will be bound in heaven, and whatever you lose on earth will be loosed in heaven." These are words similar to those Jesus said to Peter in Matthew 16:19 — meaning that Jesus is with the elders in church discipline.

By nature, most people are individualistic. And we find it hard to subject ourselves to others. These verses tell us that Jesus gave enormous power to the church elders. Perhaps we may ask, "What if the church elders make a mistake?" Then we can trust the Judge of all the earth to do right. He has not bound Himself to uphold faulty decisions. Matt 16 and 18 assume that the church elders are acting rightly. We must take church elders seriously, respond humbly, and understand that the Lord has entrusted them with authority.

I have seen many believing and baptised Christians who are not committed to belonging to any local church. Some go from one church to another. They say they belong to Christ. But that's not scriptural. You cannot belong to Christ and not belong to His body, as expressed in a local church run by elders, even if it is small.

Some Christians have problems in every church they join and find fault with the elders. They should realise that they will carry their problems with them. They must belong to a specific local church and submit to the eldership — then they can grow in Christlikeness.

3. Keys of the Kingdom are linked to the Sacraments

The power of the keys is linked to baptism and the Lord's Supper. Comparing it to a wedding will help. A wedding does not make you fall in love. But a wedding does give your love the status of a covenant. It binds your spouse to you in a lifelong commitment. It protects your love from the ups and downs of your emotions. Indeed, it is a covenant with legal status and, therefore, requires a legal process to undo.

In the same way, baptism does not make you a Christian. It presumes you have faith in Christ. But baptism does give your faith the status of a covenant. It binds Christ to you in an eternal commitment. It changes your identity. Its covenant commitments protect your faith from the ups and downs of your emotions. Indeed, it is a covenant with a legal status that requires a legal process to undo. That process is when the church elders exercise "the power of the keys of the kingdom" for church discipline. The Lord's Supper is an act of covenant renewal, so preventing an unrepentant person from participating in the Lord's Supper (Communion) would be an act of excommunication.

4. The Sacraments are linked together to Church Life

Baptism expresses our *joining* the church, and the Lord's Supper expresses our *belonging to the church*. This means baptism goes before the Lord's Supper. You join before you belong.

You cannot express your belonging to the church during the Lord's Supper until you have first joined the universal church in baptism.

Whatever reason someone gives for not being baptised is a reason for not partaking in the Lord's Supper. The reverse is also true. Whatever reason someone gives for partaking in the Lord's Supper is a reason for first being baptised.

Parents worshipping in a church that practices believer's baptism may want their children to partake of the Lord's Supper, saying their children love the Lord. But if you ask the parents whether their child was baptised, they may say that their child is not ready for baptism. In such a case, you should tell them the only

requirement for baptism is faith in Jesus. So, if the child is not ready for baptism, the child is not ready to partake of the Lord's Supper.

Often, people come regularly to a church and ask whether they may partake of the Lord's Supper. It would be best if you talked to them about baptism. Suppose they say, "I'm not ready to commit yet." Then you must speak kindly to them: "You're welcome to participate in our community life. But baptism and the Lord's Supper go together. If you're not ready to express your commitment to Christ in baptism, you're not ready to draw close and commune with Christ in the Lord's Supper."

We see the corresponding requirement for circumcision before participating in the Passover. The requirement was not elitist (even a slave), nor was it racist (even an alien) — they were invited to participate in the Passover provided all the males were circumcised, as a sign of commitment to be part of the Lord's people.

*Exodus 12:37-49 The Israelites journeyed from Rameses to Succoth. There were about six hundred thousand men on foot, besides women and children. ³⁸ Many other people went up with them, as well as large droves of livestock, both flocks and herds...⁴³ The Lord said to Moses and Aaron, "These are the regulations for the Passover: "No foreigner is to eat of it. ⁴⁴ Any **slave** you have bought may eat of it after you have circumcised him, ...⁴⁸ "An **alien** living among you who wants to celebrate the Lord's Passover must have all the males in his household circumcised; then he may take part like one born in the land. **No uncircumcised male may eat of it.***

English Standard Version (ESV) Study Bible Notes on Exodus 12:43-49:

The statutes related to the Passover were necessary in light of the mixed multitude that went out of Egypt with Israel (Exod 12:38). Participation in the feasts that would be formative for Israel's life in the land required that a person be identified as a part of the Lord's people by letting all his males be circumcised (Exod 12:48). In the NT church, there is a parallel in that baptism (the sign of membership in God's people) would ordinarily precede participating in the Lord's Supper. Similarly, here, circumcision is required before eating the Passover.

Note: Churches that hold the Believer's Baptism View do not recognise infant baptism and teach that to their members. **Nevertheless, most churches do not deny the Lord's Supper to infant-baptised believers but encourage them to be re-baptised as believers** (See Appendix 1).

Appendix 1 — Views on Baptism

The Roman Catholic View states that the act of baptism regenerates the person (infants or adults) being baptised from spiritual death to life, **even apart from faith in Christ**, and it is necessary for our salvation. This means if a person is not baptised in the Roman Catholic tradition, they are not saved and cannot be buried in a Roman Catholic cemetery. Catholics used the phrase "*ex opere operato*", (Latin words for "by administering") the sacrament. Roman Catholics say that baptism removes the person's original sin and makes them spiritually alive (born again) by **the infusion of grace** (infusion means "poured into") that begins the transforming process of making them righteous. In this view, Christ gave authority to the Church and her ordained ministers to effect saving grace in people through the administration of the sacrament — beginning with the sacrament of baptism and ending in the sacrament of extreme unction.

The mode of baptism is by pouring or sprinkling water. The Catholic Church has ordained ministers for sacraments: bishops, priests, and sometimes deacons. However, anyone can perform a baptism in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit. This is typically done only in extreme cases in which someone's life is in danger. ¹

The Lutheran View: This view also states baptism regenerates a person, yet they insist that faith is necessary for God to justify the baptised person. Lutherans **do not speak of an infusion of grace in baptism like the Roman Catholics**. Instead, the Lutherans say, by Word and sacrament, God creates faith in the individual and makes them a living member of Christ's church. For Lutherans, the subjects of baptism fall into two groups: (a) adult believers who have come to faith in Christ and (b) infants, in whom God mysteriously creates an unconscious faith, which they later confirm as they reach an age of maturity. Yet, in both cases, faith is present in the regenerative act of baptism and our justification before God.

The mode of baptism is by pouring or sprinkling water. The Lutheran Church has ordained ministers, such as pastors, for the sacrament of baptism. However, anyone can perform a baptism in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit. This is typically done only in extreme cases in which someone's life is in danger. ²

The Reformed View: Church denominations that follow Calvin's Reformed Theology, like the **Presbyterian Church**, hold this view of baptism. This view denies that baptism is regenerative and effective in the very act of baptism (as Roman Catholics believe)—instead, baptism, which, under the New Covenant, replaces circumcision as a covenant sign. Circumcision points the Jew forward to needing a circumcised heart. Likewise, infant baptism points a child forward to the day they receive Christ as Saviour and Lord.

In the Old Covenant, infants were circumcised and considered part of the covenant community. Likewise, when infants are baptised under the New Covenant, they are considered covenant members. But they are only truly born again when they believe Christ as their Saviour and Lord.

In the Presbyterian tradition, baptism is typically performed by pastors or teaching elders.

Baptism is either by pouring, generous sprinkling, or immersion in water. Pouring water is based on the understanding that pouring represents the imagery of the Holy Spirit being "poured out" on believers in various passages.

Baptism is not a private affair but in the presence of the entire church family.

Presbyterians do not re-baptise believers if they were infant baptised because their infant baptism signifies they are part of the covenant community.³

The Believers' Baptism View: This view is held by all Baptist Churches (General Baptist and Reformed Baptist), Pentecostal and Charismatic Churches, and many other evangelical denominations. Baptism is only to be applied to believers. **I, too, believe in this view**, especially in the Indian context, where even those coming from a Christian background and being infant baptised are not exposed to the gospel from childhood. *"The ministry of the word diminished in importance when infant baptism became the rule rather than the exception."*⁵

A believer's baptism is an outward sign of an inward spiritual reality that the believer has already experienced by faith in Christ. Baptism, in contrast to circumcision, does not point forward to the need for a circumcised heart. Instead, baptism is a New Covenant sign that communicates the grace of God to those who have been regenerated (born again) and thus have faith in Christ. Baptism is a public testimony that one has entered by faith into union with Christ, and it marks and defines those who believe in Christ. That is why baptism is only to be applied

to those who confess Jesus as Lord, who have experienced His power, and who are, by faith and spiritual rebirth, Abraham's true spiritual seed. **Baptism is a New Covenant rite for the New Covenant people of God.**

Baptism is by immersion in water, reflecting the believer's unity with the death, burial and resurrection of our Lord Jesus (Rom 6:3-4).

Churches that hold the Believer's Baptism View do not recognise infant baptism and teach that to their members. Nevertheless, most churches do not deny the Lord's Supper to believers who were infant baptised but encourage them to be re-baptised as believers.

Churches who hold this view believe in the priesthood of all believers. So, any believer authorised by the local congregation can perform baptisms, not just a pastor or ordained person.⁴

Note: In countries where people from non-Christian backgrounds are increasingly coming to Christ through the preaching of the gospel, I would advise pastors not to baptise believing children under 18 until they have the written approval of their parents. I would also advise pastors to use another baptised believer, preferably a relative, to baptise new believers.

Ref: Water Baptism by Stephen Wellum (Essay in The Gospel Coalition)

1. www.aboutcatholic.com
2. www.patheos.com
3. www.presbyterianmissions.org
4. www.baptistdistinctives.org
5. A Concise History of the Catholic Church by Thomas Bokenkorter, 2nd Edition published by Image Books, page 64.

Appendix 2 — Views of Christ's Presence in the Lord's Supper

One of the Church's two sacraments (or ordinances), the Lord's Supper, was instituted by Jesus

- to commemorate His death,
- to symbolise the New Covenant,
- to point to the fellowship of a redeemed people gathered at His table and
- to look forward to the Messianic banquet at the end of age.

Jesus' words when He instituted the Lord's Supper make it clear that the Supper symbolises the New Covenant and is a remembrance of His death (1 Cor 11:23-26). However, the nature of Jesus' presence at the Lord's Supper is disputed.

What does Jesus mean when He says in Matt 26:27-28 that the bread "*is my body*" and the cup "*is my blood of the covenant*"? And when Paul states in 1 Cor 10:16 of participating in the Lord's Supper: "*Is not the cup of thanksgiving for which we give thanks a **participation** in the blood of Christ? And is not the bread that we break a **participation** in the body of Christ?*" In what sense is this a "**participation**" in the body and blood of Christ?

Essentially, **four different types** of answers to this question have been proposed, leading to four different views of the nature of the Supper and Jesus' presence there.

1. Transubstantiation View (held by Roman Catholics and a few others): They believe that in the Mass, the elements of bread and wine become the physical body and blood of Christ so that there is, in some sense, Jesus offered again on the cross. The Protestant Reformers rejected this on three critical grounds: (a) Jesus is now physically present at the right hand of God in heaven. So this view effectively comes against His true humanity to say that His physical body can be present in different locations on earth at the same time (b) worshipping the bread as the body of Christ, which takes place in the Mass, was idolatrous; (c) to offer Jesus again as a sacrifice comes against the finality and sufficiency of His work at the cross (Heb 9:24-26).

2. Sacramental Union View (held by the Lutheran Church). Martin Luther (1483-1546) wished to correct the errors of the Roman Catholic view while seriously taking Jesus' identification of His body and blood with the bread and

wine. We can briefly say that Luther stated Christ is truly present in His deity and humanity, "in, with, and under" the substance of the bread and wine. God brings about Christ's presence in **union** with the bread and wine, even if there is no change in their substance. This view is also known as Consubstantiation.

3. Memorial View (held by the General Baptists, many Pentecostals and Charismatic Churches). This view is mainly associated with Swiss reformer **Huldrych Zwingli (1484-1531)**. When Jesus said in the gospels, "I am the bread of life" (John 6:35), "I am the door" (John 10:7), and "I am the vine" (John 15:5)—we don't take it, literally, but we take it figuratively. Therefore, Zwingli, unlike Martin Luther, insisted that when Jesus stated the bread "*is*" His body and the wine "*is*" His blood—the word "*is*" should be taken figuratively and not literally. The sacrifice of Jesus at the cross is complete, once-for-all, so the Supper is nothing more than a pictorial reminder, a *memorial*. Although Christ is always present with His people, He is NOT specially present at the Supper. However, there is reason to believe that Zwingli changed his view before he died to the Spiritual Presence view (see copy of his letter below)

4. Spiritual Presence View (held by Presbyterian and Reformed Baptist Churches). This position comes from **John Calvin (1509-1564)**, who taught Reformed Theology. Concerning the presence of Christ in the Lord's Supper, Calvin rejected the idea of a physical change to the bread and wine (Catholic and Lutheran views). He also rejected the memorial view (taught by Zwingli). Calvin said that at the Lord's Supper, **Christ is spiritually present in a special way** but is not physically present. A true spiritual communion occurs between the Lord and His church as the Lord's Supper is celebrated. Calvin said that the word "*is*" retains a symbolic (and not literal) meaning, but at the same time, there is a true "sharing" (participation) in Christ that takes place.

Both Charles Spurgeon (Particular Baptist) and John Piper (Reformed Baptist) were preachers taught the spiritual presence view. **I also believe in this view.**

Here is a copy of the letter attributed to Zwingli concerning the Spiritual Presence of Christ in the Lord's Supper: Near the end of his life, Zwingli summarised his understanding of the Eucharist in a confession sent to [King Francis I](#), saying:^[19]

"We believe that Christ is truly present in the Lord's Supper; yea, we believe that there is no communion without the presence of Christ. This is the proof: 'Where

two or three are gathered together in my name, there am I in the midst of them' (Matt. 18:20). How much more is he present where the whole congregation is assembled to his honour? But that his body is literally eaten is far from the truth and the nature of faith. It is contrary to the truth because he himself says: 'I am no more in the world' (John 17:11), and 'The flesh profiteth nothing' (John 6:63), that is to eat, as the Jews then believed and the Papists still believe. It is contrary to the nature of faith (I mean the holy and true faith) because faith embraces love, fear of God, and reverence, which abhor such carnal and gross eating as much as anyone would shrink from eating his beloved son.... We believe that the true body of Christ is eaten in the communion in a sacramental and spiritual manner by the religious, believing, and pious heart (as also St. Chrysostom taught). And this is, in brief, the substance of what we maintain in this controversy, and what not we, but the truth itself teaches."^[19]

19: [Schaff, P.](#) (1878). *The Creeds of Christendom, with a History and Critical Notes: The History of Creeds* (Vol. 1, p. 375). New York: Harper & Brothers, Publishers.

Ref: The Lord's Supper by Jonathan Griffiths (Essay in The Gospel Coalition)
The Ordinances of the Church by Gregg Allison (Essay in The Gospel Coalition)

Appendix 3 – Administering the Lord's Supper

In the Roman Catholic tradition, the Lord's Supper, also known as the Eucharist, is administered by ordained priests. During Mass, the priest consecrates the bread and wine, which are believed to become the actual body and blood of Jesus Christ. Only ordained priests have the authority to perform this consecration and administer the Lord's Supper.¹

In the Lutheran Tradition, the Lord's Supper is typically administered by ordained pastors. The pastor is responsible for consecrating the elements by speaking the words of institution over the bread and wine, following Jesus' example in the Last Supper.²

In the Presbyterian tradition, the administration of the Lord's Supper can be more flexible. While ordained ministers usually preside over the Lord's Supper, even ordained elders or other church members are permitted to do so, provided the governing body authorises them.³

Other Protestant Evangelical traditions (which include Baptists, Pentecostal and Charismatic denominations) believe in the priesthood of all believers (1 Peter 2:5, Rev 5:10). Therefore, in principle, they do not say a priest (as in the Roman Catholic tradition) must preside at the Lord's Supper.⁴ Some Protestants are comfortable with members of the laity administering the Supper. Others will still hold to the principle that recognised or ordained leaders (pastors, elders) should lead the service, generally for two key reasons:

- to ensure that the Lord's Supper must be carefully and reverently administered in corporate worship (1 Cor 14:40) and
- since the Supper is a reminder of the death of Jesus and a picture of the gospel, it must not be separated from the preaching of the Word (a point upon which Calvin insisted). Therefore, it is appropriate that a recognised teaching elder in the church administer the Supper and set it in the rightful context of biblical instruction.

Ref;

1. www.catholic.com
2. www.projectwittenberg.org/pub/resources/text/wittenberg/mosynod/web/sup-02.html
3. www.presbyterianmission.org/ministries/worship/faq/faq-lordssupper/
4. www.baptistdistinctives.org/resources/articles/two-ordinances/

Appendix 4 – Sacraments and Grace

There are three views on the Sacraments (ordinances) of Baptism and the Lord's Supper and their relationship with grace.

1. **The Roman Catholic View:** When administered by an ordained priest, the sacraments infuse grace into the people receiving them. (The Latin phrase the Catholic use for this process is "*ex opere operato*"). This infusion, likened to grace being 'poured into the person,' is a transformative process. In this view, God's grace is poured into the person through the sacraments as they are administered, irrespective of their faith in receiving the sacrament. The sacrament of baptism is considered necessary for salvation.
2. **The Lutheran and the Reformed View:** In this perspective, the sacraments are seen as a means of grace by which God confers the benefits of salvation to His people. **The crucial element here is faith.** In conjunction with the Word of God, the sacraments offer a promise of divine blessing (e.g., sanctification) to their recipients, who receive grace as they believe the promise. When we receive the sacraments with faith in what they signify, we receive grace and power from God.

The most significant benefit we receive from the means of grace is the **certainty** of what God promises in His written Word, which is proclaimed and enacted in baptism and the Lord's Supper.

Far from mere rituals, these sacraments are powerful means that strengthen our belief in the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ and reinforce our assurance of salvation. Lutherans, Presbyterians and Reformed Baptists believe this view. **I, too, believe in this view.**

3. **The Memorial View:** Those who hold this view often refer to the sacraments as "ordinances." In this view, ordinances symbolise the faith and obedience of the people of God. Instead of transmitting (infusing) grace or serving as a means of grace, ordinances allow people to express their allegiance to Christ when they receive them. But there is no special grace from God in receiving them. General Baptists, some Pentecostals and Charismatic Churches believe in this view.

Appendix 5—Summary Table of Views on the Lord's Supper

	What is the Supper?	How is Christ present?	Who taught this view?	Where is this view adopted today?
Transubstantiation	A sacrifice for the righteous	The substance of the bread and wine is transformed into Christ's body and blood.	Thomas Aquinas	Roman Catholic Church & Anglo-Catholic Churches
Sacramental Union (also known as — Consubstantiation)	A promise for sinners	The real presence of Christ comes in union with the bread and wine only when the believer receives the elements by faith.	Martin Luther	Lutheran and many Evangelical Anglican Churches
Memorial View	An ordinance for believers	The bread and wine are signs of the body and blood of Christ.	Huldrych Zwingli	Many Baptist, Pentecostal and Charismatic Churches
Spiritual Presence	A means of grace for the participating believers	Christ is spiritually present in the Supper as a sign and to accomplish what He promises.	John Calvin	Reformed Churches in the Anglican, Baptist, Presbyterian and some Independent Churches.

Ref: Chalk on the Table—the Story behind our Different Views on Communion by Jared Kennedy (Article in The Gospel Coalition)

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2. *Pillar N.T. Commentary on the Gospel of John* by Dr D. A. Carson (Logos Bible Study Software)
3. *International Standard Bible Encyclopaedia* (Biblesoft)
4. *Faussets Bible Dictionary* (Biblesoft)
5. *Nelson Bible Dictionary* (Biblesoft)
6. *Evangelical Response to the clauses of Baptism, Eucharist, and Ministry (BEM) in the Lima Document of 1982* by the World Council of Churches. Dr D.A. Carson was part of the committee that formulated the Evangelical Response, which he published in *The Gospel Coalition*.
7. *Why we eat the Lord's Supper Parts 1-4*, by John Piper (*Desiring God* website)
8. *Sermons* by Sinclair Ferguson, Alistair Begg, Tim Keller, Kevin De Young, Bill Johnson on the Lord's Supper
9. *Article on Baptism* by Stephen Wellum (*The Gospel Coalition Course* material)
10. *Essay on the Ordinances of the Church* by Gregg Allison (*The Gospel Coalition*)
11. *Chalk on the Table—the Story behind our Different Views on Communion* by Jared Kennedy (Article in *The Gospel Coalition*)