

# The Lord's Baptism and The Lord's Supper

By George Walters

A FEW WEEKS AGO my attention was aroused by a statement to the effect that a believer does not have to be baptized in order to partake of the Lord's Table. From what I had been taught, this statement rang an alarm in my thinking as to what Baptists really believe on the subject. I went to my library and the Word of God for a close examination of the matter. As a result of this study, the following thesis has been prepared. In these lines I would have you consider with me three vital questions pertaining to this subject:

1. Why didn't Jesus adopt an Open Communion policy when he instituted the Lord's Supper?

2. Where in the New Testament can we find the Apostles believed in the Open Communion policy?

3. Is the Open Communion policy in keeping with God's divine order?

**1. Why didn't Jesus adopt an Open Communion policy when he instituted the Lord's Supper?**

The very first thing that Jesus did before He began

His public ministry was to go to the Jordan and to be baptized of John. We also know that during the first six months of His ministry He either baptized (Jn. 3:22), or witnessed the baptisms (Jn. 4:1-2), of His twelve disciples. It was two and one-half years after these baptisms that the Lord's Table was instituted. During that time He had gathered as many as five hundred brethren (1 Cor. 15:6) about Him, all of whom were believers in Him; yet when He instituted the Lord's Table, only twelve (of whom we have no reasonable doubt concerning their act of baptism) were present.

I quote from *McConnell's Manual for Baptist Churches*, published by the Judson Press in 1926, as follows from page 65: "No man can make me believe that Mary the mother of Jesus was not, at that time, a saved woman. She was in the city and was at the cross the next morning. She was not invited to the Supper. The man who owned the house in which the Supper was taken was not invited. Lazarus whom Jesus loved and raised from the dead a few days before

that Supper was not invited. His sisters, Mary and Martha, were not invited. Mary Magdalene and the 'other Mary' were not invited. Joseph of Arimathea, who within twenty-four hours of that time furnished a tomb for Jesus' body and wrapped it affectionately in fine linen, was not invited. The first Supper was restricted beyond doubt."

Here is another quotation from the *New Directory for Baptist Churches* by Edward T. Hiscox, D.D., published in 1902 by the American Baptist Publication Society, page 134, under the title, "Its Subjects": "Who ought and who have a lawful right to come to the Lord's Table will be seen by a careful study of the Scripture narratives. From these it is manifest that baptized believers, walking orderly in the faith of the Gospel, and in the fellowship of the Church, constitute the proper subjects for this privilege. *And no others.* Some have insisted on its having a wider scope; some even going so far as to hold that no limitations or restrictions whatever should be imposed

on the privilege.

"Observe that our Savior at the institution 'sat down, and his apostles with him' (Lk. 22:14). Here is a very restricted, and so to say, Close Communion. Neither His own mother, nor His brethren, nor the many relatives and friends who had followed Him, were invited to be present; for what reason we do not know, but they were not there. Only the twelve Apostles. He gave the bread and the cup to His disciples, and said, 'Take this and divide it among yourselves' (Mt. 26:26; Lk. 22:17). He did not tell them to distribute it to others, nor invite others to come in and partake of it. That little company in the upper chamber was substantially the incipient Church; and the Supper was with and for the Church alone."

A third quotation, this time from *The Moral Dignity of Baptism* by J. M. Frost, published in 1905 by the Sunday School Board of the Southern Baptist Convention. On page 190, under the title, "The New Testament Law," we read: "The New Testament must govern concerning these two

ordinances of the New Dispensation. In all questions arising here, settlements must be made by appeals to this new law. Not to family relations — not to men, however learned and wise and good — not to tradition, though dignified as church history — not to customs, personal comfort or private preference or convenience — not even to the Old Testament Scriptures.

“Baptism and the Supper are New Testament ordinances, and all questions concerning them must therefore be settled by the New Testament law. If it be silent, silence best becomes us; if it command, verily ‘to obey is better than sacrifice.’ We have no right even to think as we please about baptism and the Supper. Here private right and individual duty coincide; it is at once our right and our duty to study the New Testament for ourselves and so find out what we

must think and do concerning these high matters which God is requiring of our hands, and for which *each one must give* account in personal obedience.

“There is a fixed order between these two ordinances. It is this, Baptism and the Supper, not the Supper and Baptism. They come to us from our Lord in this order, and are so stamped with His authority. This order is of universal acceptance by all denominations of Christians, an individual here and there dissenting, as being the order authorized and commanded in the New Testament.

*“There is no authority for inviting and admitting the unbaptized to the Supper. There is fundamental law against it ...*

“The prerequisites, prescribed and required as understood and stated, at least nominally, by all the creeds and confessions of faith, are these — namely,

profession of faith in Jesus, baptism, and church membership. This covers what is commonly, but erroneously, called ‘close communion.’ It is the Baptist view of the Lord’s baptism in relation to the Lord’s Supper. There is no difference between Baptists and others, either in the principles or the prerequisites of the order. We simply insist that the Lord’s baptism and the Lord’s Supper must be observed as the Lord requires. This issue between us and others really concerns baptism, and this issue in its last analysis is a question of much moment. It is a question not of ‘how much water,’ not about ‘going to one place by different routes,’ but simply and earnestly *a question of obedience*. We ought to understand this issue and insist upon the principle of *obeying the commands of our Lord*.

“Christ has put restrictions on these ordinances; before baptism there must be faith; before the Supper there must be baptism. Baptism is the privilege of believers, and the Supper is the privilege of baptized believers who are walking orderly before the Lord and among their brethren. Restriction of baptism means restriction of the Supper, and the law, as interpreted by all, means the restriction of both ordinances.”

**Testament can we find that the Apostles believed in, or supported, such a policy?**

When the Apostle Paul wrote to the Corinthian Church his instructions about the Lord’s Table in chapter 11 of the first epistle, he was writing to an *assembly made up entirely of baptized believers*. He knew no other type of church member. That the Christians in Corinth were baptized believers was a commonly accepted conclusion. So when Paul took the Corinthians to task in verse 27, he was not disputing about the exclusion of unbaptized believers, but he was reprimanding them for their turning the Lord’s Table into a gluttonous feast and a drunken orgy. Note in verse 1, “Be ye followers of me even as I also am of Christ.” Our Lord was baptized three years before He instituted the Communion Service. Paul also was baptized before he ever became acquainted with the Lord’s Supper. Why should unbaptized believers have privileges in the Church today that our Lord, who is the Head of the Church, did not allow for Himself or for His Apostles?

In verse 2, Paul commands the Corinthians to keep the ordinances (plural) as he delivered them to the church. Since there are but two or-

## 2. Where in the New

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dinances for the New Testament church to keep, Paul made it his business to faithfully teach them wherever he established a Christian assembly. So the question as to whether unbaptized believers had a right to partake of the Lord's Supper was never brought up. They didn't have that problem.

When an individual in the days of the Apostles accepted Christ on the terms of Romans 10:9-10, "he and his household were baptized immediately" (Acts 16:33).

Peter, James, John and Jude wrote with the same idea in mind. I quote again from the *New Directory for Baptist Churches* by Edward T. Hiscox, D.D., page 69: "The spiritual change of the new birth begets Christian fellowship; but to secure Church membership, that change must be confessed in baptism. This is the New Testament order. At the first it was so; they repented, they believed, they were baptized, then added to the Church. Without confession in baptism there could be no Christian churches."

### **3. Is the Open Communion policy in keeping with God's divine order of events?**

To answer this question we must examine God's divine order in Old Testament events; and in them we will see the New

Testament law clearly revealed. In Genesis 6:8, "But Noah found grace in the eyes of the Lord." Noah was a saved man, and was held in favor with God. In chapter seven we find Noah in the ark; and in chapter nine the new food in the new world is given. The Apostle Peter, in his first epistle, chapter 3:20-21, used these events to illustrate the important place that baptism holds in the New Testament law. He said that baptism is "the answer of a good conscience toward God." According to the Apostle Peter, then, those who have not been baptized have not given "an answer of a good conscience toward God." Therefore, when they approach the Lord's table without this rite, they do so unworthily.

Again in Exodus 12, we have the story of the institution of the Passover Feast. In Egypt, a type of the world, the lamb, a type of Christ, our sacrifice, was slain. According to verse thirteen, wherever the blood of the lamb was applied, there judgment was stayed. In chapter fourteen, Israel is seen passing out of Egypt through the Red Sea into a new life of freedom. In chapter sixteen they received the new food: manna from heaven. In chapter twelve they were still eating the onions, leeks and cucumbers. But not until they passed through the sea could they receive the new food.

In 1 Corinthians 10:1-4, the Apostle Paul refers to this event, giving me the impression that he recognized in it the divine law of the New Testament regarding the relation between the Lord's baptism and the Lord's Table: first, there was salvation through faith in a substitutionary sacrifice; second, baptism by passage through the Red Sea, and third, the Lord's bread from heaven in a new environment free from bondage.

In this passage also Paul is writing to baptized believers. But note in verses five and six: "but with many of them (who passed through the Red Sea) God was not well pleased: for they were overthrown in the wilderness. Now these things were for our examples (who are baptized believers), to the intent that we should not lust after evil things, as they also lusted."

Another striking illustration as found in the books of Moses is the order of the Tabernacle. At the door of the Tabernacle there stands the brazen altar where the substitutionary sacrifice is made. Between this altar and the door to the Holy Place stood the brazen Laver. Inside the Holy Place was the Table of Shewbread, the priest's food. No priest could enter the Holy Place and approach the Table of Shewbread without first visiting the altar of atonement and the Laver

for cleansing.

The Apostles recognized the divine order of events on the day of Pentecost. when Peter reached the climax of his sermon, the people demanded his instructions as to what they should do. His answer was, "Repent, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins, and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Ghost." In verse 41 we read, "They that gladly received his word *were baptized*: and the same day there were added unto them (who had already been baptized) about three thousand souls."

Then follows verse 42, "And they continued steadfastly in the Apostles' doctrine and fellowship, and in breaking of bread and in prayers." There is no room for Open Communion here. Find it if you can! The same order is recognized here: 1. Repentance; 2. Baptism; 3. Church Membership; 4. Breaking of bread; 5. Prayers.

In *The Moral Dignity of Baptism* by J. M. Frost, beginning at the bottom of page 192, we read, "There seems to be a fundamental reason for the order in which these two ordinances come. *Baptism indicates the beginning of the New Life*, and so comes first and at the beginning — and only once. *The Supper marks the maintenance and continuance of that life*, and so comes after and

is of frequent repetition. Baptism as a symbol shows spiritual life to be connected with Christ in its beginning; the Supper shows spiritual life to be connected with Christ in its continuance. In the Supper we have a picture of the new life feeding on Christ — as when the daughter of Jarirus was raised from the dead, they set refreshments before her. There is no need for the Supper until after baptism — no need of feeding life until there be the sign of life begun. Displacing the ordinances disarranges the system and destroys their beauty and meaning. *Baptism first, and afterwards the Supper.*”

Again, on page 194: “Baptism and the Supper may be called the externals of the Gospel system — but not non-essentials. There is no saving efficacy in either of them, or in the two together. But who will venture to say that these ordinances are non-essential or of little moment in the Kingdom of God?”

The Open Communion policy is of rather recent interpretation. The Presbyterians, Methodists, Congregationalists and other denominations follow the New Testament order of steps toward communion as outlined above, even though they do not accept immersion as the Scriptural mode of baptism. “Close communion” was not confined to the areas south of the Mason-Dixon Line. The

*New Directory for Baptist Churches*, written by Edward T. Hiscox, to which I referred above, was published in 1902, and *McConnell’s Manual for Baptist Churches*, written by J. M. McConnell, to which I also referred, was issued in 1926. Both of these books were printed by the American Baptist Publication Society for churches located north of the Mason-Dixon Line. The contents of these books were accepted as the basis of rules and order by a large majority of the churches of the then known Northern Baptist Convention.

This fact necessarily places the Open Communion policy outside of the ranks of Baptists altogether and establishes it as an anti-Baptist position. Allow me again to quote from *The Moral Dignity of Baptism* by J. M. Frost, page 198, as follows:

“Baptism and the Supper are in danger from two directly different things — namely, the spirit of controversy and the spirit of ‘Christian liberality,’ so called. At times and places controversy has caused people to disregard the ordinances, or talk of them only in the spirit and language of strife. Indeed, Baptism and the Supper have caused the fiercest conflicts through the centuries, and today are foremost in causing divisions among the followers of Christ. This is a source

of regret, and yet shows the immense importance of the ordinances and the earnest conviction and purpose to withstand any infringement on their exalted character and to maintain them as our Lord gave them to His people. Controversy may be bad, especially when conducted in an unchristian spirit, and yet better this way by far than unfaithfulness to Christ and Christ’s laws and ordinances. *Any surrender here, or compromise of any kind, would be traitorous to Christ*, and disastrous to His truth and to His ordinances as expressing great truth.”

Summing up the whole matter, we may conclude *obedience to Christ to be the chief principle involved*. Our Lord emphasized obedience.

John 14:15: “If ye love me, keep my commandments.”

John 15:10: “If ye keep my commandments, ye shall abide in my love; even as I have kept my Father’s commandments and abide in his love.”

John 15:14: “Ye are my friends if ye do whatsoever I command you.”

Matthew 28:19-20: “go ye therefore, and teach all nations, *baptizing* them ... teaching them to observe all things whatsoever *I have commanded* you.”

Finally, there is one more quotation from *The Moral Dignity of Baptism* by J. M. Frost, page 203:

“The law of Christ

concerning these ordinances is imperative. Baptism and the Supper are still binding, and *require obedience at our hands* (Italics mine). They are the same now in form and spirit and meaning as with the early Christians. To change them, or to mar them in any way, is to break the law of Christ, and has in it every essential of disloyalty. Duty seems clear. His voice of command comes to us — ‘teach them to observe all things whatsoever I commanded you’; ‘this do in remembrance of me — as oft as ye eat this bread and drink this cup ye do show the Lord’s death till he come.’ Baptism must still tell in lofty symbol of His death and burial and resurrection, also of our union with Him in the risen life; the Supper as the New Testament in His blood must still tell in symbol of its shedding on the cross for the remission of sins and of our continued life in Him. And together baptism and the Supper must show to all the world our loyalty to Him.

“A plea for these ordinances is a plea for organic Christianity, and should appeal to all Christians of every name. We must give them due prominence, and so fulfill the law of Christ. They are still the Lord’s baptism and the Lord’s Supper. They are our high privilege and solemn, earnest duty. Enshrine these ordinances in your hearts for conser-

vation; let the love of the Master kindle and glow around the Master's institutions and become most ardent and unconquerable when standing for faithfulness and loyalty in the things He has commanded."

