

Voices: Lord's Supper for baptized believers only

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For many years, the Baptist faith has allowed true believers professing their faith in Jesus to become members of a Baptist church and to be qualified to participate in the Lord's Supper only after they are baptized by immersion in water. This follows Jesus' commandment to be baptized and to identify with him.

This also follows the example in the Holy Bible of believers who were baptized immediately by immersion in water after their profession of faith in Jesus, being identified with Jesus as they are buried with him by baptism unto death and, like Jesus, are raised from the dead to walk in newness of life.

Following the Baptist faith, only those who have been baptized by immersion in water should be invited to participate in the Lord's Supper.

At the present time, there are some churches in the Southern Baptist Convention—some of which are large churches—that do not abide by the Baptist belief regarding baptism by immersion in water being required before a person can be invited to the Lord's Supper.

These churches practice what some call "open communion," since they invite anyone who says they have made a profession of faith or claims to be a believer in Christ, without mentioning to them the need to be a church member or having been baptized by immersion in water. This is an important part of the Baptist faith.

Open communion

Open communion allows those who have not been baptized properly as Jesus commanded and those who do not have a saving faith to participate in the Lord's Supper with true believers who have a relationship with Jesus and know him, because they have obeyed Jesus' command of baptism by immersion in water, which identifies them with him.

It is the responsibility of the church to invite to the Lord's Supper only those who have been baptized by immersion in water, explaining who may participate.

Mode of baptism

There are some who believe they can substitute sprinkling or pouring in the place of immersion in water and call it baptism. If sprinkling and pouring are substituted for immersion in water, it would appear changes to the Scriptures are being made for these modes to be added, which is not allowed.

The Holy Bible, God's word, is final, and changes to it are prohibited. Immersion in water—believers' baptism—is the only method authorized in the Bible and cannot be changed. Sprinkling or pouring, by definition, are not the baptism commanded by Jesus.

Those who have been sprinkled or poured should not be invited to the Lord's Supper in a Baptist church. Only those who have been immersed in water obeying Jesus' commandment to be baptized are eligible to participate in the Lord's Supper in a Baptist church.

It is also the responsibility of the church to explain the responsibility of the individual to determine if they are worthy.

Baptism in relation to Lord's Supper

We see in 1 Corinthians 11:27-31 that a person must examine themselves to see if they are worthy to participate in the Lord's Supper. The passage states if a person participates in the Lord's Supper when they are not worthy, there may be unwanted consequences.

Not obeying the command of Jesus to be baptized, which is stated in the Bible only as immersion, appears to make them unworthy when reviewing verses like 1 John 2:3-4, which says we do not know Jesus if we do not keep his commandments.

The churches may have open communion to promote unity, for financial reasons, being influenced by those coming from other churches with different beliefs or some other reason. One Baptist church has added an associate membership to include those who cannot qualify for full membership.

A call for correction

It is difficult to believe the leaders of a Southern Baptist church do not abide by the Baptist faith regarding baptism by immersion in water as a requirement for participation in the Lord's Supper, since the Baptist belief is supported by example in the Holy Bible.

Inviting or allowing those who were sprinkled or poured could give the impression the Baptist church and the person giving the invitation believes their belief is acceptable, and that it is OK to add these modes to change Scripture.

Only those who have demonstrated their obedience to Jesus, identifying with him by baptism by immersion in water, as shown in the Bible, should be invited to the Lord's Supper in a Baptist church.

Hopefully, the leaders of these churches with open communion will return to the belief of Baptists, realizing this is necessary so they can properly honor our Lord as we remember what he has done for us.

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