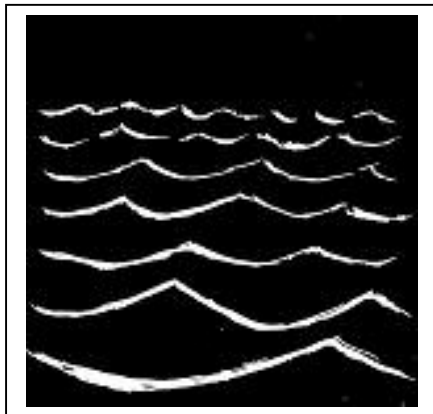


Session Two

The family celebrations

*“Those who accepted the message were baptised...
They devoted themselves to the apostles’ teaching and to
the fellowship, to the breaking of bread and to prayer.”*

Acts 2 verses 41-42



Last week we looked at the family hallmark...the message of new life in Jesus. When there is a marriage, there are the rings that are signs of what has been promised. They have a special significance for those who are now covenanted to each other. There are also signs of our new relationship with Jesus Christ. These have a special significance for us. As the unbroken ring signifies everlasting love and commitment, Baptism and Communion have very special meanings for us. We call them Sacraments...an outward sign of an inward reality. And we celebrate them.

When someone accepts Jesus as Lord it is just the beginning of a wonderful, challenging new life following him. The New Testament tells us that when the first believers accepted the message about Jesus, they were not left to their own devices: they were baptised and 'added to the number' of the church (Acts 2:41).

Why should people be baptised?

At that time Jesus came from Nazareth and was baptised by John in the river.”
Mark 1:9

**Even Jesus did it.
He also commanded it**

Jesus said, ‘Go then, to all people everywhere and make them my disciples, baptise them in the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit, and then teach them to obey everything I have commanded you.’” Matt. 28:19-20

Like the wedding ring, it is a sign to others of your new status

*...many of the people who heard Him **believed** and were **baptised**.”* Acts 18:8

*“We know that we have come to know Him, if we **obey** His commands.”* 1 J
John 2:3

Baptism doesn't make you a believer — it shows that **you already believe**.
Baptism does not “save” you, only your faith in Christ does that.

Have you ever seen anyone baptised as a believer?

What is the meaning of baptism?

Going right under the water represents Christ's Death and our desire die to our own selfish attitudes

Christ died for our sins... He was buried...and He rose again.” 1 Cor. 15:3-4
*“For when you are **baptised**, you were **buried** with Christ, and in baptism you were also **raised** with Christ.”* Col. 2:12

2. Coming back up illustrates the resurrection of Jesus and the new Life God Has given us as Christians

"When someone becomes a Christian he becomes a brand new person inside. The old life has passed away and a new life has begun!" 2 Cor. 5:17

"By our baptism then, we were buried with Him and shared His death, in order that, just as Christ was raised from the dead...so also we may live a new life!" Rom. 6:4

3. The water also represents the cleansing that God does in forgiving us from our wrongdoing.

"And now what are you waiting for? Get up, be baptised and wash your sins away, calling on his name." Acts 22:16

4. Baptism is a sign of my membership of God's worldwide family

"those who accepted his message were baptised, and about three thousand were added to their number that day." Acts 2:41

"For we were all baptised...into one body" 1 Corinthians 12:13

5. It is a way of stating my newfound faith amongst my family, friends and the local community

"...if you confess with your mouth, 'Jesus is Lord', and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved." Romans 10:9

Ask someone who has been baptised as a believer what it felt like.

Who should be baptised?

"Those who believed and accepted His message were baptised..." Acts 2:41

"But when they believed Philip as he preached the Good News...and the name of Jesus Christ, they were baptised, both men and women." Acts 8:12

This explains why Baptists do not baptise (or christen) infants. Baptism in the New Testament seems to be for those who have come to believe in Jesus for themselves.

Notice that Baptists do not practise **adult** baptism. We practise **believer's** baptism.

We do recognise that, at the beginning of a child's life, it feels right to say thank you to God for the gift of that child, and to present the child to God, just as Mary and Joseph presented the baby Jesus at the temple when he was a few days old. Because of this we practise **Infant Dedication**, at which we also dedicate ourselves, with God's help, to the task of bringing up the child, and to sharing the Christian faith with them.

We also recognise that, for some, their baptism as infants meant a lot to their parents. We respect that. But we do not feel that having been christened prevents anyone from being baptised as a believer.

When should people be baptised?

*“Those who believed...were baptized...**that day!**” Acts 2:41*

“Then Philip began with the scripture and told him the Good News about Jesus. As they travelled along the road, they came to some water, and the man said, ‘Look, here is water! Why shouldn’t I be baptised right now?’ Philip said, ‘If you believe with all your heart, you may.’ The man answered, ‘I believe that Jesus Christ is the Son of God.’ So they went down into the water and Philip baptised him.” Acts 8:35-38

As soon as you have decided to receive Christ into your life, you can and should be baptised. You don’t have to wait until you feel good enough. The whole point is, none of us ever will be! And it doesn’t matter how old you are, as long as you have some understanding of what you are doing.

If you have been a Christian for a while but have not been baptised as a believer, why not take the opportunity to ask if that can happen in the next few weeks? In the New Testament there is no such thing as an ‘unbaptised Christian’. In being baptised you will be obeying the command of Christ (Matt.28:19).

The Meaning of Communion

There is also a more regular way to remind us of what God has done for us, what He has promised and what is to come.

Just as some people find it helpful to put flowers by the roadside or next to a picture or on the grave when someone has died, so Jesus gave us a very special unique way of remembering Him. We do this as an act of worship.

What Is Communion?

(1 Cor. 11:23-26)

It brings back to our consciousness the reality of

1. Jesus’ body given for us

*“...and when he had given thanks, He broke it and said, ‘This is my **body**, which is for you; eat it **in remembrance** of me.’ (v.24)”*

2. Jesus’ blood as the mark of the new covenant that God has made with us

"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.'" (v. 25)

3. Jesus' promise to come back one day

"For whenever you eat the bread and drink the cup, you proclaim the Lord's death until He comes back." (vs. 26)

4. Our oneness in Jesus, no matter what colour, culture, gender or class we come from

"Is not the bread that we break a participation in the body of Christ? Because there is one loaf, we, who are many, are one body, for we all partake of the one loaf." 1 Cor. 10:16-7.

Who should take Communion?

Anyone who sincerely believes, and wants to follow Christ.

"Jesus took bread, gave thanks and broke it, and gave it to his disciples." Mark 14:22

How do I prepare myself for Communion?

"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. A person ought to examine himself before he eats of the bread and drinks of the cup." 1 Cor. 11:27-28

1. Self-Examination
1 Cor. 11:27

2. Restoring Relationships
Matt. 5:23-24

3. Confession
1 John 1:9

4. Recommitment
Rom. 12:1

Some churches celebrate communion every week, others less often so that it does not become too much of a routine.

Ask how others feel and what helps them to concentrate on Jesus when taking communion?

Next Week: The Family tasks

- What is the Worldwide Church for?
- How do we do this locally?