



BELIEVERS CHAPEL

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The Sermons of S. Lewis Johnson

Acts 2:41 & 47

"The Local Church: Its Ordinances"

TRANSCRIPT

Now, we want to finish our section on the elders or the under shepherds dealing with page five in our outline of the third lecture in Arabic one, their titles.

Now, what I would for you to do is turn with me to Acts chapter 20, verse 17, Acts chapter 20, verse 17. You'll remember the context of this passage the apostle is meeting with the Ephesians elders and we read in Acts chapter 20 and verse 17: "and from Miletus he sent to Ephesus and called to him the elders of the church." Now, notice the expression the elders of the church. Then let's look down to verse 28 he is speaking to this same group that he has called elders in verse 17: "Be on guard for yourselves and for all the flock among which the Holy Spirit has made you overseers (or as the authorized version has it bishops) to shepherd the church of God which he hath purchased with his own blood." So you can see that in verse 17 he calls them elders but in verse 28 he calls them bishops.

Now, turn with me to Titus chapter 1 verse 5, Titus chapter 1 verse 5 we'll look also at verse 7 in a moment, Titus 1 verse 5, the apostle is writing to Titus and in Titus 1:5 he says, "For this reason I left you in Crete that you might set in order what remains and appoint elders in every city as I directed you." Titus incidentally was an apostolic legit an apostolic representative and so he appointed them under the apostles jurisdiction.

"Appoint elders in every city as I directed you; (let's read on) namely if any man be above reproach the husband of one wife having children who believe not accused of dissipation or rebellion." Oh, incidentally, having children who believe is another mistranslation of the New American Standard Version, it is not required that an elder have believing children, and it's a sad translation because a simple looking at the concordance of the use of the adjective *pistos* in the pastoral epistles would have made very plain that the word does not mean believe but trustworthy, that is reliable children, children under the control of their parents, not believing. And it's sad because I have often heard people make great points over the fact that you should not have an elder in the church whose children are not believers but that is not the meaning of this passage. It means that his children should be in subjection to him because if he cannot control his children he cannot control the local church. But the question of the belief of children; now, that's another matter, and that ultimately is the responsibility of God the Holy Spirit, and so a man may be an elder who has a child who is ten years old who has not yet come to faith but, nevertheless, is a child who is in subjection and in obedience to his father. I say that because I say I heard people make great points over this and it's totally unjustified, as a simple study of the concordance would have made plain.

Verse 7: "For the overseer." Now, notice in verse 5 he is called an elder but in verse 7 he is called an overseer or a bishop. So from these passages it is clear that the term elder is the same as the term bishop or the bishops are elders and the elders are bishops and we have no justification for a separate office of bishop according to the New Testament. Why the two names? Well, in the case of the term elder the dignity of the office is stressed, he should be a mature man in the faith an elder. On the other hand, why the term bishop? Well, bishop is a term that refers to oversight; oversight is a function or the duty. So the term elder stresses the dignity of the office, the term bishop stresses the duty that the officer performs.

Second: The Identity of the Terms: We've already talked about that and by the way that interpretation that I have given you in which the elders equal the bishops or the bishops equals the elders is an interpretation that even the Anglicans agree is the teaching of the New Testament.

Third: Their Plurality: It is the contention of some people that the elder is only a single office in the church that is, that in the idea New Testament church there should be one elder that man being the pastor of the church. The New Testament again does not support that idea; it supports the idea of a plurality of elders in the local church. Listen to Paul's word to the Philippians in the very first verse of the epistle. "Paul and Timothy bond servants of Christ Jesus to all the saints in Christ Jesus who are in Philippi including the overseers and deacons. Notice the plurality of the officers in the church there are overseers or elders and there are deacons.

So plurality, incidentally even Strong the Baptist theologian admitted the plural eldership existed in many New Testament churches although he denies the necessity of a plural eldership, but what about the passage in 1 Timothy chapter 3? Let's turn over there because this passage has been thought to teach that there should be just one elder in each church and that man the pastor of the church. 1 Timothy chapter 3 verse 2 reads: "It is a trustworthy statement that if any man aspires to oversight it is a fine work he desires to do. An overseer then." Notice if any man aspires and in verse 2, "An overseer then." And so here we have the singular does this suggest that we should have simply one elder in the church? Well, in my opinion this singular overseer is a generic term. "It's a trustworthy statement if any man aspires to oversight, it's a fine work he desires to do, an overseer." He does not mean that there is only one, he simply begins to talk about the office and you naturally speak of it in the singular it is what is called generic that is it is a singular that refers to a kind of person. Now, that's a recognized use of the singular in the Greek New Testament.

Will you turn over to chapter 5 let me show you that this was the apostles custom and in this very epistle we find it. Verse 3, he says, "Honor widows who are widows indeed but if any widow (you see he's used the plural but now he speaks generically) if any widow has children or grandchildren let him them practice piety." So it was customary for the apostle to use the generic singular and 1 Timothy chapter 3, verse 2 does not suggest that there should be just one elder in the church.

By the way Mr. Prier who is one of the elders here some time ago did some research on the New Hampshire Articles of Faith as I remember and pointed out that many of the Baptist who subscribe to that confession of faith also affirmed plural eldership in the local churches. So elders exist in the plurality.

Now, I don't have time to look at all of these passages but I suggest you look up the passages in Philippians 1:1, 1 Thessalonians 5:12, incidentally, it is the opinion of some that you can support the idea of one elder in each church by affirming that when the apostle speaks of elders he's talking about different groups that form different churches in one city. For example, when he said, "Call for the elders of the Church in Ephesus." He's speaking of the elders that come from a number of local churches in the area and they could be called the elders of the Church at Ephesus because they had a number of different churches and they had a kind of unity. Incidentally, there is no indication in the New Testament of any church that had but one elder and yet we do have the term plural used constantly. I've always contended you ought to interpret the Bible by the things it says not by the things it doesn't say. But take the case of the Thessalonian Epistles the apostle speaks of the leadership in the plurality but it's only been a few weeks since he was in Thessalonica and you would have to assume that while the apostle has been gone just at the most six weeks, now, we have a flourishing group of churches all over the city which is just totally contrary to what we know of the history of the early church. The apostle speaks of the plurality of the leadership in 1 Thessalonians chapter 5 and verse 12. And the other passages also support that idea.

Their Functions: What are the functions of an elder? Well, the functions of an elder are to lead the flock of God, to guard the flock of God, to discipline the flock of God. The very idea of shepherding which applies to the elders take heed to the flock of God over which the Holy Ghost hath appointed you overseers to shepherd the flock of God which he hath purchased with his own blood. The very idea of shepherding involves government it involves the leading of the sheep, so that to lead and to guard from false doctrine and to disciple the flock when they get out of line, these are the responsibilities of the elder of the local church. Again, I repeat please look up these passages and study them for yourself.

Fifth: Their Qualifications: Well, their qualifications are given to us in 1 Timothy chapter 3 in verse 1 through verse 7. One of the things that has always interest students of this is that the apostle says that they should be blameless, now, that seems a strange thing. An overseer must be above reproach, blameless. Now, in what sense can a man be blameless? Well, if we're speaking about blameless in a sense that there should be no manifestation of the sin principle in his life at all, no one can ever be an elder. That's obvious. Every elder is a sinner there are bound to be certain ways in which he manifests that fact he is the subject of sanctification as long as he's living so in that sense only our Lord is blameless. In fact, blameless is the ultimate condition to which we come. Paul says that we've been chosen that we should be holy and without blame before him in love but that's when we get to heaven not until then. So I think we are to interpret blameless in the passage here with reference to it's immediate context. He is to be blameless with respect to these specific qualifications; that is set forth in the context here. So for example, if he is a man who does not manage his own household well, well, he is blame worthy, as far as, the apostle speaks. If he is not able to keep his children under control with all dignity then he is blameless in that respect so he should not be an elder if he cannot control his household, but blameless then means blameless in these specific requirements the apostle sets forth.

Notice, also that the requirements for elder and deacon are minimum qualifications. It's not that the elder should have a higher standard for live who is not an elder, they all should have the standard of life set forth in the New Testament but the elder has a minimum standard. He cannot be an elder if he does not meet the qualifications set forth here.

Sixth: The Method of Recognition of Elders: This is a rather difficult subject because the Bible doesn't say anything about electing elders. It would be nice if we had been given an insight into the local church and had listened to them as they went about the job of selecting elders. What we read about in the New Testament is that the apostles appointed elders and we also read that there are certain qualifications set forth for elders. So we have to infer from the material that we have and we infer from the material that we have that it is the responsibility of the elders to emerge from a congregation.

Now, Acts chapter 20 and verse 28 said, "Take heed to the church of God over which the Holy Ghost hath appointed you overseers." So we learn from that that it is God who appoints elders not man. We may elect the man elder in the local congregation but he's not an elder if God has not appointed him and furthermore, God may have appointed someone elder and the congregation fail to elect him, that's often happened. The key thing is appointment by the Holy Spirit. Now, if he has been appointed by the Holy Spirit we believe in the light of the New Testament considering it's sufficient for the work of the local church and guiding the local church, that if he has been appointed by the Holy Spirit as elder and he meets the qualifications; of course, he would not be appointed by the Holy Spirit if he did not meet those qualifications but we objectively observe his life that he meets the qualifications set forth in scripture and he has been appointed by the Holy Spirit the result will be that he will begin to shepherd the saints. And through the shepherding of the saints that he engages in soon it will come to the attention for the elders that brother so and so has been appointed by the Holy Spirit to the office of elder and it is manifested in that he is doing the work of shepherding the

saints. He is leading them, he is guarding them, keeping them from false doctrine, concerned with them, and then the elders have the responsibility to recognize him publicly as an elder and to welcome him to the body of the oversight in the local church.

So the key thing then is the appointment by the Holy Spirit and then the emergence of that man in the congregation by virtue of the qualification according to scripture and the carrying out of that work in the local church.

I think that's what the New Testament teaches us about the method of recognition. God appoints elders, men recognize them when they meet the qualifications and are functioning as such in the local church.

Their Tenure: Well, we all know about the rotation system. There is no such thing as a rotation system in the New Testament. The reason the rotation system arose is because, "What are we going to do about brother so and so who is on the board of elders and he is not doing the work? He's a big problem, he's either grown too old or he's grouchy or he just doesn't really qualify, who's got the nerve to tell him?" Well, a rotation system you could just rotate him off after three years.

Now, but all of these means by which we do things that are unpleasant are always at best secondary, the primary thing to be done is to follow God's word the responsibility is to go to brother so and so, brother grouchy and say look you're not measuring up to the office of elder. Either you have to straighten up or you will have to come under discipline because in the fifth chapter of first Timothy Paul sets forth ways by which or means by which the elders themselves are subject to discipline. The rotation system I say arose because of the fact that it's unpleasant to carry out discipline at times, but nevertheless, it has to be done.

Let me say just a word about deacons, we'll have to hurry. The deacons are assistants it would seem to the elders. How do they differ from the elders? Well, think of the word deacon for a moment what it means is simply a servant and as you read through the qualifications for deacon in verse 8 through verse 13 you notice the absence of any

governing duties the absence of any teaching duties and the word itself a servant would indicate that they are assistance to the elders. They are not necessarily men who are going to be elders, to be a deacon is not necessarily to enter into what is to become a proving ground for elders though that might happen, but the deacon is a servant who helps the elders in the work of the local church freeing the elders for the ministry of the word and the carrying out of duties that have to do with the edification of the body in the scriptures. Therefore, the duties have supervision under the elders of such things as, the property, service in the church, many of the details which must be done if we're to have a successful ministry of the word of God. The deacons are absolutely essential it is high office in the Lord it is a spiritual office but at the same time they are assistance as I see it to the elders.

Well, let's turn now to our other subject for tonight and this subject will be the ordinances of the church. Perhaps it would be wise for me to just briefly define an ordinance, I've forgotten whether I put it on the notes because I passed you out all of the notes and mine is over there in my briefcase and it will take me a few minutes to find it.

The Definition of an Ordinance: An ordinance is a symbolic right setting forth primary facts of the Christian faith and universally obligatory among believers. Did I put that in the notes? All right, I'll repeat it again: An ordinance is a symbolic right setting forth primary facts of the Christian faith and universally obligatory among believers. Give it another time: An ordinance is a symbolic right setting forth prior facts of the Christian faith and universally obligatory among believers. I suggest you look at 1 Corinthians chapter 11 verse 2 and verse 23 for some text that bear upon the topic.

How many ordinances are there? There are two ordinances baptism and the Lord's Supper. Baptism signifies our initiation into Christ and into the church. The Lord's Supper expresses our continuation in Christ. By Baptism we symbolize our entrance into the body. As we sit at the Lord's Table week after week we signify by that our continuance in the body, in relation to the Lord and in relation to one another.

Roman Catholics have five more ordinances. They have the ordinance of ordination, when a priest is ordained that is an ordinance; they have the ordinance of confirmation, they have the ordinance of matrimony; they have the ordinance of extreme unction; and the ordinance of penance, this is one of the ways in which the Roman Catholic Church differed from the Protestant Church in the time of the Reformation; Protestants contending that there were two ordinances and the Roman Catholics insisting on seven.

Let's come now to the ordinance of baptism and we'll consider it in seven aspects.

A. The Adumbration of Baptism: We're all familiar with our Lord's baptism by John the Baptist and if you want to turn there to Matthew chapter 3 verse 13 through 17, I'll read the verses in order to refresh our memories, verse 13 of Matthew chapter 3. I was getting ready to read Malachi; that would have been strange:

"Then Jesus arrived from Galilee at the Jordan coming to John to be baptized by him, but John tried to prevent him saying, I have need to be baptized by you and do you come to me; but Jesus answering him said to him permit it this time for in this way it is fitting for us to fulfill all righteousness, then he permitted him. And after being baptized Jesus went up immediately from the water and behold the Heavens were opened and he saw the Spirit of God descending as a dove and coming upon him, and behold a voice out of the Heavens saying this is my beloved son in whom I am well pleased."

[Message] What does the baptism of John when he baptized the Lord Jesus signifies? It was our Lord's identification with the nation Israel in the repentance that they should have when the King comes, it was his inauguration into his Messianic ministry, that's the reason the Father said this is my beloved Son in whom I'm well pleased, putting together three great passages from the Old Testament each of which is Messianic. And it is also an illustration of the goal of his ministry in the mirror of the cross because as our Lord went down into the water and came out of the water he visibly symbolized by what

he did, what he was going to do in his ministry as Messiah he was the suffering Messiah who should die.

We often hear people say when they talk about baptism that, "We are going to follow the Lord in baptism." I seriously question that statement we do not follow the Lord in baptism only if we mean simply the Lord was baptized and we're baptized. The Lord was baptized with the baptism of John we are baptized with Christian baptism. The Lord Jesus' baptism signified his identification with the nation Israel in repentance. It signified his inauguration into his Messianic ministry it illustrated the goal of his ministry and his death burial and resurrection. There is only a connection between the two. We are not baptized as our Lord was baptized. Our baptism, however, follows from what began then. Will you turn over to chapter 20 verse 22? This I think is one of the key texts on the meaning of baptism. "Jesus answered and said you do not know what you are asking for, are you able to drink of the cup that I am able to drink of? They said unto him we are able." Now, he doesn't use the word baptism here.

Let's turn over to the [Comment] did I? Yes. That's the reason it's in the King James Version but it's not in the Markan context. Let's turn over to the Markan passage and look at that. I don't have time to look at my Greek text. Let's see; verse 38. While you are finding Mark chapter 10, verse 38 I will look at the Matthean passage here; I think it's simply because it was a textual difference; yes that's the reason.

Now, in the Markan passage in chapter 10 verse 38 we read, "But Jesus said to them you do not know what you're asking for are you able to drink of the cup that I drink or to be baptized with the baptism with which I am baptized." Now, notice that this is a reference to his death. That is evident from the context and he is calling it a baptism so when our Lord suffered on the cross it was a baptism. Baptism is a death and that's the key to the teaching of baptism it is not a purification; purification is the result of the baptism. The key word is identification with our Lord in his death so when we are

baptized we are identified with him in his death. It is the apostle Paul who gives us the full explanation of that.

Now, let's turn to the last chapter of the book of Matthew, last chapter of the book of Matthew a passage that is up for exposition this coming Sunday morning in Believer's Chapel. In the last of the commissions in the book of Matthew the Lord Jesus says in verse 19, "Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit." Now, here we have a kind of progression we have our Lord being baptized by John and as he went down into the water and came out he gave in a picture form a picture of what he was going to do, to die, to be buried and be raised again. In chapter 20 or in chapter 10 of Mark he said his death was a baptism. Now, he tells the apostles to go out and make disciples of all nations baptizing them in the name of the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit so his work is the baptism, ours is a visible rite that symbolizes our incorporation into him in his death burial and resurrection, the key thing is his death by faith. So the institution of baptism is related to what our Lord had done with John the Baptist and what he had said about baptism later on.

Let's move on to: D. The Administration of Baptism: Who performs the baptizing act, an ordained minister? That is the general opinion that an ordained minister is the only person who can baptize. Well, now, if you look at Acts chapter 8 and verse 12 you will discover that Philip the evangelist and deacon also baptized. And if you look at chapter 9 verse 18 in the book of Acts you will discover that it is most likely that it is Ananias who baptizes. The idea that baptism is only performed by an ordained man is not found in the Bible at all.

Now, I do think that it is probably proper more desirable for an elder to perform the act of baptism or some deacon to perform the act of baptism, like a Philip but so far as, the New Testament is concerned there is no requirement whatsoever that baptism be

performed by any kind of special ordained man. Later on we'll have a word to say about ministry so we will just leave it at that.

As far as the New Testament is concerned any Christian may baptize another Christian.

E. The Proper Subjects of Baptism: Who are to be baptized? In the early church they baptized flags, they baptized bells, they had forced baptisms of children these were lucrative early church practices because they charged for all of these things. Might be a way to see that the treasury of the local church is constantly filled. But all of these innovations are not found in the Bible. So far as, the Bible is concerned it is believers who are baptized. In acts chapter 10 verse 44 through verse 48, in the house of Cornelius it is plainly stated there that believers are to be baptized. There remember the apostle Peter is preaching the gospel to the Gentiles and in Acts chapter 43 he gave the gospel and we read in verse 44:

"While Peter was still speaking these words the Holy Spirit fell upon all those who were listening to the message and all the circumcised believers who had come with Peter were amazed because the gift of the Holy Spirit had been poured upon the Gentiles also for they were hearing them speaking in tongues and exalting God. Then Peter answered, surely no one can refuse water for these to be baptized who have received the Holy Spirit just as we did, can he?"

[Message] And you can see hear they received the Holy Spirit through faith in the word of God and as a result of that they were baptized.

So believers are baptized. You can look at the other passages such as Acts chapter 16 verse 14 and 15, when Lydia was baptized, Acts chapter 16 verse 31 through verse 34 and chapter 18 verse 8, but what about infant baptism? The earliest reference that we have historically to infant baptism is in the last half of the second century.

Albertus Peters who was a very fine Presbyterian man, a member of the Christian Reformed Church a man who was a missionary and a very godly man, but not a pre-millennialist, and a Presbyterian he believed that infants should be baptized. He said in one of his statements concerning this, "However, that if you look through the New Testament and try to find anything about infant baptism you will find nothing whatsoever about it, it was not found in the New Testament at all." He admitted that and then he sought to justify it. He said, "For example, if some intelligent being from Mars should come to visit our earth and we should hand him our Bible with the request to tell us what he found he would learn the general doctrine and some of the practices of the Christian religion without any other aid. He would find the Lord's Supper, the organization of the church with elders and deacons and adult baptism, but it is safe to say that little children should be baptized." That's an amazing admission for a man who believed in infant baptism.

Carl Bart was a reformed man and finally he came to the conclusion in the fourth section of his fourth volume of theology, which was really about the twelfth volume of his theology, he has a section in which he speaks about infant baptism and says it's not found in the New Testament at all and he like most of the Reformed New Testament scholars have abandoned the doctrine of infant baptism. When I was in Scotland there were four Universities in Scotland they were all reformed Presbyterian theological colleges, in Attenborough, Saint Andrews, Aberdeen and Glasgow and each one of them had a professor of the New Testament. All of these men in the Presbyterian schools acknowledged that the earliest form of baptism was by emergence; so as far as, the historical reference is concerned there is no suggestion whatsoever that infant baptism was taught or practiced in the early truth. As Tertullian said, "Custom without truth is error grown old." And that is what we have with the infant baptism that is practiced today.

There is a comical story about an Episcopalian and a Baptist who were debating the question of infant baptism and the Episcopalian turned to Matthew chapter 19 verse 14 in support of his text and sighted it to the Baptist and that text reads something like this: "Let the children alone and do not hinder them from coming to me for the Kingdom of Heaven belongs to such as these." And the Baptist immediately turned to him and said, "Ugh. King of Basham, the mercy of God endures forever." And the Episcopalian said, "What in the world does that have to do with the subject?" [Laughter] He says, "Nothing, nor does your text either." [Laughter]

There are some of my good Presbyterian friends who say that in the Old Testament the infants who were males had to be circumcised and in the New Testament circumcision is replaced by baptism and, therefore, we should expect the infants to be baptized in the New Testament. That, of course, does not hold, it is not only not taught in the New Testament but if you just reflect for a moment and realize that for example, when a proselyte came into Judaism he had to be baptized and also circumcised so it's obvious that baptism and circumcision weren't regarded by the Jewish people as the same thing. Our Lord Jesus was circumcised and he was also baptized it's evident that according to biblical teaching they are not the same thing. So the idea that because an infant in the Old Testament who was a male was circumcised, therefore, we ought to baptize infants is a figment of the imagination of some.

As far as, the physical mode of baptism is concerned whether it should be done by... What I'm saying essentially is, let me state it plainly, the Bible teaches believer's baptism not infant baptism, believer's baptism, so that a person should come to an understanding of the faith that he has been brought to and then, he should be baptized and not until then.

The Proper Place for Baptism: Well, you can be baptized in various places, you don't have to be baptized in the baptistery here in Believer's Chapel's building it's a convenience for us but it would be just as well to take you out to the Trinity River and

baptize you there. It might be a little muddier, and you might find some days it would be difficult to find any water at all but there is no proper place for baptism.

As far as the proper mode is concerned, well, water is the element. Luther said if water was not present good German beer would do; but, that's the kind of thing that Luther would say he was trying to tress the fact I presume that the precision of the liquid does not necessarily mean that it would not be a proper baptism but water is the proper element.

There is an old story that used to be told about West Texas when it said the trout was so bad that the Baptists were sprinkling; and the Methodists were using a damp rag; and the Presbyterians were giving out rain checks. [Laughter] I heard a story also about a Baptist preacher who was exhorting a congregation to get saved and to be baptized and laying a great deal of stress on baptism and it was a rather informal meeting and one fellow spoke out and said, "I've already been baptized in the Methodist Church." He said, "You weren't baptized you were dry cleaned there." [Laughter]

The physical mode, as far as, the Bible is concerned seems to be emersion. The reason I think the New Testament teaches emersion is that for example, when Philip baptized the Ethiopian eunuch we read that they went down into the water. The preposition "as" is used and when the act is finished they came up out of the water preposition "at" being used. The same kind of thing is used with reference to our Lord Jesus Christ's baptism. Now, of course, it is possible that Philip and the Ethiopian eunuch went down into the water and he poured water on him in the water, that's possible. The very possibility of that is probably one of the reasons that the debate over the method of baptism has not been solved to everyone's satisfaction even to today. But emersion is generally recognized as having been practiced by the early church and the fact that our Lord and Philip went down into the water and came out of the water certainly seems to harmonize more plainly with emersion.

In addition, the word *baptizo* which is used with baptism is frequentative of the word "bapto" which means to dip so that ordinarily when a word is formed in that way in the Greek language then it would mean to make to do what the root meant so it would mean to cause to dip, *baptizo*; *bapto*, to dip; *baptizo*, to cause to dip. And in addition, we do have words for sprinkling in the New Testament, *rontizo* which means to sprinkle. It's used in the New Testament. So if sprinkling were the mode you would expect that the word *rontizo* would be used in some of the places but it is not. So I do think that it is proper to say that the physical mode is emersion.

In my own case I was baptized by sprinkling. When I came to seminary I sat in the classes and for a year or two, I listened to the debates that Baptist on one room the Presbyterians on the other. The debates waxed very warm over a lengthy period of time. And I listened to all of the arguments and I finally came to the conviction that I ought to get baptized again since the Baptist convinced me that the believer's baptism was taught in the New Testament. And then I had to think about the mode. And after doing as much study as I possibly could I came to feel that I should be baptized as a believer and by emersion. And so I was baptized as a believer by the method of emersion. I think that is what the New Testament teaches.

The actual ceremony itself, well, 1 Peter chapter 3 verse 21, suggest to us that at the time of the testimony a person gives a pledge of a good conscience before God. I think that text if you look at it carefully teaches that baptism is a pledge of a good conscience before God and that's why we ask questions incidentally of individuals at the time of their baptism because they are replying and giving their testimony, they are giving in their own testimony a pledge of the fact that they have truly believed in the Lord and their conscience is clear with respect to the penalty of sin. Incidentally, I do think the Greek word that's used there should be translated "pledge" a pledge of a good conscience.

Well, I hesitate to start in on the ordinance of the Lord's Supper but let's at least try to make a beginning and we'll have to pick it up next time.

The ordinance of the Lord's Supper symbolizes our continuous in the body of Christ. It's very important it is the only act of worship for which we are given special directions in the New Testament. The highlight of the corporate worship of the church it is not the sermon it is the Lord's Supper, it would seem. "On the first day of the week when the disciples came together to break bread," Luke says in Acts chapter 20 verse 7. It seems to indicate that the chief purpose for meeting is to observe the Supper along with it of course there went the manifestation of the gifts, the opportunity for exercise of priesthood. That's why in this particular assembly we have an open meeting in which the men participate and the gifted men have a chance to exercise their spiritual gifts and the priest have an opportunity to express their worship and praise to the Lord.

The piety that omits the observance of baptism or the Lord's Supper is not genuine piety in my opinion. It is possible you know, for people to be so interested in the victorious life that they neglect such simple things as water baptism and the observance of the Lord's Supper. I could never understand, I must confess, the reasoning of a person who is so occupied with the more esoteric features of the Christian faith neglecting the simplest little things that we know please the Lord and which can be so easily done, to be baptized in water, how simple that is. It's the obedience of a command that Jesus gave, surely all Christians ought to want to do that.

And then to come to the Lord's Table, he said with regard to the last Passover and the first Lord's Supper, "With desire have I desired to eat this Passover with you." That's a way of saying I've greatly desired to do it. He's very pleased when we come to the Table. And so it's a simple little thing that everyone can do and it should be it seems to me the desire of every Christian to observe the Supper because we know that we please him in doing it. It's difficult to please him in some of the other things that are set forth in the New Testament but it's easy to do it in that.

The biblical significance of the Supper is set forth in 1 Corinthians chapter 11 verse 27 through verse 34; since we're not teaching in the depth of a theological seminary course at this stage I'll only have to mention the fact that there are four theories with respect to the significance of, "This is my body and this blood is the blood of the new covenant." There is the Roman Catholic theory of transubstantiation in which by words of institution the Priest transforms the bread into the body and blood of our Lord Jesus Christ.

Most of us in this room I'm sure believe when he said, "This is my body." He's using the term "is" in the same sense in which we use it in English often, "This means my body." Just as in Revelation 1:19, when he took the cup and said, "This cup is the new covenant in my blood." No one would say that, that cup was the New Testament or the new covenant. We mean this cup signifies it. And even the Romanist take that interpretation in the second.

The Lutherans proclaim the doctrine of "consubstantiation" and they mean by that, that when we take the bread and wine the body of our Lord and the blood of our Lord are in with and under the elements "consubstantiation" the Latin word "con" means with when used as a prefix. Luther and the Presbyterian side of the Reformation conflicted over this as you'll remember and that became one of the major differences between the Lutherans and the Reformed men in the Reformation family. And Luther finally said, "Your people are of a different spirit from our people." And it had to do largely with this difference historically.

The Calvinist of the John Calvin part of the Calvinistic family believe that when we take the elements the spiritual presence of the Lord Jesus is in the elements. The bread is not the body and the wine is not the blood, but our Lord is spiritually present in the elements. Zwingli who was the Zurich Reformer in the Calvinistic side of the Reformation, Zwingli taught that at the Lord's Supper we observe the Supper as a

memorial of our Lord's death for us so that the bread and the wine are memorials of his body and his blood.

Most Protestants today follow the Zwinglian interpretation. There maybe some sense, however, of the spiritual presence of our Lord and perhaps we should not rule that out entirely, but generally speaking we think of the element of the bread and the wine as being memorials, first of his body which he gave for us and then of the new covenant in his blood which is shed for many for the remission of sins...

[TAPE ENDS ABRUPTLY]