

Are You Partaking in This Supernatural Power?

Would it make a difference in what I receive from the Lord if, when I partake of the Lord's Supper, I view it as a sacrament (a means of receiving His life-transforming power) rather than simply a symbol?

As long as we're asking this question, let's include water baptism and marriage in the discussion. Are these also sacraments? Nowhere does the Bible call any of these symbolic. The Bible does use the word symbol twice (Zech. 3:8; Heb. 9:9), so there is a place for symbols and parables in Scripture. However, the Lord's Supper, water baptism and marriage are never spoken of as merely symbols. Could I be wrong? I am really a stickler for Scripture. If I believe something and can't back it up with Scripture, then I throw it out and embrace what the Bible actually says. So what exactly does the Bible say?

Water Baptism—Can I Believe for New Freedom When I Am Baptized?

The word "baptize" simply means to submerge, immerse or dip under. In Christian water baptism, you are briefly immersed under water and then brought back up. There are several layers of meaning to this ceremony. First, it beautifully illustrates the death, burial and resurrection of Christ. At the same time, it is an outward demonstration of what has happened to you in the new birth. Your old man—that independent self that demanded its own way and thought it was the center of the universe—has died. What do you do with something that is dead? You bury it. And so baptism symbolically shows that your old self is dead and buried and no longer in control. As you are brought back up out of the water, it is the new you who is a child of God who comes forth, rising in newness of life.

But water baptism is also one of the doorways that open up more of God's grace to us. The church has historically considered water baptism to be a sacrament, which means it is a visible ceremony by which God confers His grace upon us. To understand the power involved, consider the sacrament of matrimony. Remember the words of Jesus concerning marriage, "What God has joined together, let no man put asunder" (Matt. 19:6b)? Through the marriage ceremony, God supernaturally and mysteriously unites a man and women into one flesh (Mark 10:8).

Water Baptism Can Be a Sacrament if We Have Faith to Believe It

Water baptism can be a sacrament wherein God gives us the grace to die to sinful patterns and live in victory. I have personally known individuals who have gone under the waters of baptism as smokers and risen up free from the addiction. So you see, while it is a picture of your death and burial in Him, it can be much more than that, if you will believe. Romans 6:3-14 clearly says that we *have been buried* with Him through baptism into death; we *have died* with Christ in order that our body of sin might be done away with. Colossians 2:11-14 declares we *were buried* with Him in baptism and raised up with Him through faith.

If you will embrace it in faith, God will use the opportunity of your baptism to cut the power of sinful habits out of your life and release you to a new level of holiness that you have not known before (1 Pet. 3:21, Rom. 6:4, Col. 2:11-14).

Lord's Supper: 'As often as you eat ...'

The Lord's Supper is regarded as another sacrament of the church—an outward ceremony in which the Lord imparts grace to His people. There is the grace of forgiveness of sins as we remember the blood of Jesus. There is the grace of healing when we remember His broken body. There is the grace of

knowing that God has chosen to covenant with us to provide all our needs, both spiritual and physical (2 Pet. 1:3, Phil. 4:19). There is the grace of all the blessings given through the divine exchange on the cross. And there is the grace of being part of a body, no longer walking alone but a member of the royal priesthood, the holy nation, the church of Jesus Christ (1 Pet. 2:9).

Paul exhorts us to remember Christ's death every time we eat bread and drink the fruit of the vine (1 Cor. 11:23-26). Some churches offer Communion in their services just a few times a year; others offer it every day to those who will come. But there is nothing in Scripture that says only an ordained minister can bless the elements and remember the Lord's death and receive the grace that is offered through the Lord's Supper.

Whenever you meet with fellow believers, you can share the bread and the cup, and by faith receive whatever you need. In fact, there is no reason you cannot remember His sacrifice every time you eat and drink, even if there is no one else with you. You are still a member of the body and a partner in the covenant, and His grace is available to you every day.

The Bible states, "This is My body ... this is My blood" (Matt. 26:26-28, Mark 14:22-24, Luke 19-20, 1 Cor. 11:23-31). So could I partake of the Lord's Supper in faith, believing to receive everything His body and blood provides for me? His broken body provides my physical healing (Isa. 53:5). His blood washes away all my sin and I stand glorious and radiant in God's sight. Shame is gone. Darkness is gone. Guilt is gone. I am free.

As for me, I choose to honor water baptism, the Lord's Supper and marriage as sacraments (Prophetic Gestures), and in simple childlike faith receive all these amazing provisions which God has made available to me. {eoa}

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