

Unit III: The Church and Its Teachings

Outer Expressions of Inner Truths

DEVOTIONAL READING: John 1:29-34

BACKGROUND SCRIPTURES: Matthew 3:13-17; 28:19-20; Acts 2:38, 41;
Romans 6:1-14; 1 Corinthians 11:23-29

PRINT PASSAGES: Matthew 3:13-17; 28:19-20; 1 Corinthians 11:23-29

Key Verses

Go ye therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost: teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you: and, lo, I am with you always, even unto the end of the world. Amen. (Matthew 28:19-20, KJV)

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“Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you. And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age.” (Matthew 28:19-20, NIV)

Lesson Aims

As a result of experiencing this lesson, you should be able to do the following:

- Examine the vital role of baptism and the Lord’s Supper in the Christian faith.
- Discover your identity as God’s beloved in whom God is well pleased.
- Bring the Good News of Jesus to those with spiritual, economic, and social needs.

*Key Terms

Baptized (Matthew 3:13)—Greek: *baptizó* (baptid’-zo): dipped; submerged, but specifically of ceremonial dipping; ceremonially washed.

Examine (1 Corinthians 11:28)—Greek: *dokimazo* (dok-im-ad’-zo): to test, prove, discern.

Hindered (Matthew 3:14)—Greek: *diakólúo* (dee-ak-o-loo’-o): obstinately prevented; “forbad” (KJV); “tried to deter” (NIV).

Righteousness (Matthew 3:15)—Greek: *dikaíosuné* (dik-ah-yos-oo’-nay): justice; equity (of character or act); Christian justification.

Testament (1 Corinthians 11:25)—Greek: *diathéké* (dee-ath-ay’-kay): a disposition; a contract (especially a devisory will); “covenant” (NIV).

Voice (Matthew 3:17)—Greek: *phóné* (fo-nay’): sound; tone; utterance; cry; noise; dialect.

*(Word Study Supplement—Refer to page 2)



Overview

Today's lesson is drawn from the books of Matthew and 1 Corinthians. Matthew worked as a tax collector before following Jesus. He wrote the gospel that bears his name. Paul, once a zealous persecutor of Christians, authored the letter to the Corinthians. At first, these two men appear to share little in common: yet, both experienced life-changing transformations after meeting Jesus.

Matthew, originally named Levi, carried a reputation as a sinful traitor because he collected taxes for the Romans. Paul, born to devout Pharisees and trained by the respected teacher Gamaliel, fiercely opposed early Christians, believing he served God by persecuting them. Both men's lives changed completely after encountering Christ—Matthew left behind his wealth to follow Him, and Paul began preaching the Gospel he once worked to destroy.

Remarkably, Matthew went on to write one of the four gospels, and Paul authored thirteen New Testament letters—possibly fourteen, including Hebrews. In today's passage, the work of all three persons of the Trinity appears clearly, and Jesus affirms the reality of the Triune God. Paul also offers valuable insight into the Last Supper, revealing deeper meaning in Christ's sacrifice and the unity that believers share in Him.

Life Happens

Some moments don't change who we are—they reveal who we've been becoming all along. Think about graduation. Wearing a cap and gown doesn't make someone educated. They mark the growth that's already taken place—hours of study, setbacks, intention, and perseverance. The ceremony is both symbolic and significant. It reveals the journey that began in private, now made public.

That's what baptism is. It's more than being immersed in water . . . it's an act of alignment; it is a way of saying, "I've chosen this path, and I belong to Christ." It doesn't signal instant transformation. It marks commitment. The Lord's Supper affirms that same journey. When we eat the bread and drink from the cup, we aren't performing—we're remembering. We're anchoring ourselves again in the grace that welcomed us in . . . and not because we've earned it, but because love made room for us.

These sacred ordinances—baptism and the Lord's Supper—aren't just rituals. They are gifts given by God to ground our faith in something we can touch, taste, experience, and remember. They draw us back to grace, belonging, and the steady work of God shaping our lives. They remind us that faith is not just something we hold in our hearts—it's something we live with conviction and visibility, as we follow Christ in community.

Questions

1. During Communion, what thoughts typically come to mind? How could you make it more meaningful as an "anchor"?
2. Baptism marks commitment, not perfection. What commitment to Christ do you need to "mark" or renew in your life right now?
3. Who in your circle of influence lives like God does not love them? How could you help them see the truth?

The Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit

(Matthew 3:13-17; 28:19-20)

KJV

13 Then cometh Jesus from Galilee to Jordan unto John, to be baptized of him.

14 But John forbad him, saying, I have need to be baptized of thee, and comest thou to me?

15 And Jesus answering said unto him, Suffer it to be so now: for thus it becometh us to fulfil all righteousness. Then he suffered him.

16 And Jesus, when he was baptized, went up straightway out of the water: and, lo, the heavens were opened unto him, and he saw the Spirit of God descending like a dove, and lighting upon him:

17 And lo a voice from heaven, saying, This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased.

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19 Go ye therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost:

20 Teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you: and, lo, I am with you always, even unto the end of the world. Amen.

NIV

13 Then Jesus came from Galilee to the Jordan to be baptized by John.

14 But John tried to deter him, saying, "I need to be baptized by you, and do you come to me?"

15 Jesus replied, "Let it be so now; it is proper for us to do this to fulfill all righteousness." Then John consented.

16 As soon as Jesus was baptized, he went up out of the water. At that moment heaven was opened, and he saw the Spirit of God descending like a dove and alighting on him.

17 And a voice from heaven said, "This is my Son, whom I love; with him I am well pleased."

.....

19 "Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit,

20 "and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you. And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age."

Jesus traveled from Nazareth to Galilee with the specific purpose of being baptized by John (3:13). Jesus was not baptized because of any personal sin, only to fulfill God's mission and affirm the work that John had begun. Jesus viewed His baptism as an essential step in advancing God's redemptive plan. John had been preaching about the coming Messiah, who would baptize with the Holy Spirit and not just with water. He emphasized Jesus' authority and superiority. When Jesus asked John to baptize Him, John hesitated (3:14), recognizing Jesus' divine identity. Jesus assured him that this act was necessary to "fulfill all righteousness" (3:15). Jesus chose to be baptized publicly, identifying Himself with the very people He came to save. As He came up from the water, the heavens opened, the Spirit of God descended

like a dove and rested on Him (3:16), and the Father's voice declared His pleasure in His Son (3:17). The Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit—each person of the Trinity—were present at this moment, affirming the significance of Jesus' mission.

This baptism marked the beginning of Jesus' public ministry. Later, as recorded in Matthew 28:19, He commanded His disciples to make disciples of all nations. While this mission is humanly impossible, it becomes possible through the power of the Holy Spirit. Jesus calls His followers not just to share information but to lead transformation—teaching in a way that shapes the life of the learner. God's Word does more than inform; it changes hearts and lives through the power of God.

What Do You Think? All three persons of the Trinity—the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit—were present at the baptism of Jesus. Why is this significant for understanding His mission and the nature of God?

The Lord's Supper (*1 Corinthians 11:23-29*)

KJV

23 For I have received of the Lord that which also I delivered unto you, that the Lord Jesus the same night in which he was betrayed took bread:
24 And when he had given thanks, he brake it, and said, Take, eat: this is my body, which is broken for you: this do in remembrance of me.
25 After the same manner also he took the cup, when he had supped, saying, this cup is the new testament in my blood: this do ye, as oft as ye drink it, in remembrance of me.
26 For as often as ye eat this bread, and drink this cup, ye do shew the Lord's death till he come.
27 Wherefore whosoever shall eat this bread, and drink this cup of the Lord, unworthily, shall be guilty of the body and blood of the Lord.
28 But let a man examine himself, and so let him eat of that bread, and drink of that cup.
29 For he that eateth and drinketh unworthily, eateth and drinketh damnation to himself, not discerning the Lord's body.

NIV

23 For I received from the Lord what I also passed on to you: The Lord Jesus, on the night he was betrayed, took bread,
24 and when he had given thanks, he broke it and said, "This is my body, which is for you; do this in remembrance of me."
25 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."
26 For whenever you eat this bread and drink this cup, you proclaim the Lord's death until he comes.
27 So then, 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.

28 Everyone ought to examine themselves before they eat of the bread and drink from the cup.
29 For those who eat and drink without discerning the body of Christ eat and drink judgment on themselves.

Paul assured the Corinthians that the teaching he shared came directly from the Lord (verse 23). On the night of His betrayal, Jesus transformed the Passover into the Lord's Supper. Passover celebrated deliverance from slavery in Egypt; the Lord's Supper celebrates deliverance from sin. It serves as a memorial of fellowship with Christ. The bread represents His body, showing that He lived among humanity and bore our sins on the Cross (see 1 Peter 2:24; John 1:14). The cup represents His blood, shed for the forgiveness of sins (see Matthew 26:28). Through Jesus, the new covenant replaced the old, giving believers direct access to God without the need for priests or animal sacrifices.

Partaking in Communion demonstrates remembrance of Christ's death and renews commitment to serve Him. The Lord's Supper calls believers to reflect on what Jesus did, why He did it, and the hope His sacrifice gives for the future (verse 26). It is not a casual meal but a sacred act of worship. Treating it lightly dishonors Christ's sacrifice. No one is worthy of partaking, yet God's grace saves sinners and invites them to the table. Before participating, believers must remove barriers that harm their relationship with Christ and others—through self-examination, confession of sins, and reconciliation with fellow believers (verse 28). Awareness of sin should not deter believers from Communion but, rather, lead them toward it with gratitude.

 **What Do You Think?** Why might Paul have stressed that his instructions came directly from the Lord? How significant is that emphasis for believers today?

Your Life

In the new covenant, God commands believers to love their neighbors. Aligning daily actions with God's will shows obedience to that command. God's love, demonstrated through the gift of His Son for the forgiveness of sins, becomes the example for how to love others. Genuine love requires deliberate action—choosing to serve, care for, and value others.

Your World!

Chameleons blend in to survive, but believers are called to stand out because they are saved. It can be tempting to blend into earthly surroundings, but believers must remember that Christ died to give eternal life. Living with that hope should inspire a bold, distinct faith that influences others and points them toward God's kingdom.

Closing Prayer

Lord, although humanity can never earn Your love, thank You for giving it freely. Help every believer to live in a way that honors Your sacrifice and reflects Your grace. In Jesus' name we pray. Amen.

