

The Ordinances

I. Introduction: Defining the Ordinances

- **Biblical Foundations:** The ordinances of Baptism and the Lord's Supper are established by the direct command and personal example of Jesus Christ.
- **Symbol vs. Sacrament:** The sermon distinguishes these as "ordinances" (acts of obedience) rather than "sacraments" (means of earning grace). They are outward signs of an inward spiritual reality.
- **A Global Heritage:** These practices have been preserved and practiced across every corner of the globe for thousands of years, serving as defining marks of the Christian faith.

II. Baptism: The Public Identification

- **The Example of Jesus (Matthew 3:13–17):** Jesus submitted to baptism not for the removal of sin, but to fulfill all righteousness and to mark the beginning of His public ministry.
- **Symbolism of Death and Life:** Baptism by immersion serves as a powerful visual of a believer being buried with Christ in death and raised to walk in "newness of life."
- **Public Testimony:** It is the primary way a believer publicly identifies with Jesus and the local church body, signifying a clean break from the old life.

III. The Lord's Supper: The Regular Memorial

- **The New Covenant (Luke 22:14–20):** Instituted during the Passover, Jesus used the bread and the cup to represent His body and blood, signaling the establishment of a New Covenant.
- **Acts of Remembrance:** The command to "do this in remembrance of me" serves as a recurring opportunity for the church to refocus on the sacrifice of Jesus.
- **Spiritual Nourishment:** While the elements are symbolic, the practice provides spiritual endurance and strengthens the believer's connection to the Gospel.

IV. The Purpose of the Ordinances

- **Visibility of the Gospel:** The ordinances make the invisible truths of the Gospel visible to both the church and the world.
- **Unity of the Body:** Participating together in these acts reinforces the unity of the believers as one family under one Lord.
- **Obedience and Discipleship:** Engaging in these practices is a high-priority act of obedience that honors God and helps in the process of making disciples.

V. Conclusion: Beyond Routine

- **Avoiding Ritualism:** The sermon warns against letting these practices become empty religious routines; they must be practiced with active faith and gratitude.
- **A Call to Commitment:** Believers are encouraged to prioritize these moments as vital anchors for their spiritual health and as powerful tools for leading others toward Christ.
- **Anchored in Reconciliation:** Ultimately, both ordinances point back to the free gift of reconciliation and the hope found in the finished work of Jesus.