

# LOGOS OF CHRISTIANITY

MA 28:19; 1 CO 10:16

Matthew 28:19, “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...”

1 Corinthians 10:16, “The cup of blessing which we bless, is it not the communion of the blood of Christ? The bread which we break, is it not the communion of the body of Christ?”

Most companies and organizations have a logo.

You’ll recognize these (Target and Nike)... Here’s a really popular logo (Calvary Chapel Stone Mountain)...

Perhaps you’ll recognize these two... (Georgia and Georgia Tech). Each year **The University of Georgia** and **The Georgia Institute of Technology** make lots of money from the licensing of their logos. Trademarks are *popular*, and *profitable*, and most of all, *protected*.

Even after you purchase a license to use a Georgia or Georgia Tech logo there are still restrictions on its use... *UGA forbids showing their beloved Bulldog with a beer can in his paw... Georgia Tech bans the placing of the Tech emblem on a toilet seat...* Each school is proud of its logo. They expect it to be respected.

Christianity also has two logos: **baptism** and **communion**. We call them "**ordinances**" - an ordinance is "a practice that’s been divinely decreed."

Ordinances are activities that have been registered in heaven, and licensed to every succeeding generation of Christian believers... *and there are two!*

Over the years man has tried to add to God's list of trademarks... Roman Catholics add five: **Confirmation, Penance, Extreme Unction, Orders, and Matrimony.**

Some fundamentalist groups add **Foot-washing.**

For most theologians there's a rule - a threefold test - that gets applied to a practice to determine whether it was meant to be normative for the entire Church...

First, was it **initiated by Jesus?**

Second, was it **practiced in the book of Acts?**

And third, was it **taught in the NT letters?**

Apply this test to the aforementioned ordinances and only two pass muster: **Baptism and Communion.**

*Baptism* is a microcosm of Jesus' work upon the cross and His subsequent work in our hearts...

*Communion* is a focal point for the unity and intimacy the believer enjoys with His Lord, **and** with other members of the Body of Christ... Baptism speaks of our *forgiveness.* Communion speaks of our *fellowship.*

Just as a logo is a capsular expression of an organization's objective and core values, likewise baptism and communion represent the heart of Christianity. They are logos, and that's why they need to be *enthusiastically practiced* and *carefully protected.*

I'm reminded of the young pastor who was very enthusiastic about his first baptism. The night before the pastor and his wife ate dinner at a friend's house...

All the pastor could talk about was his excitement over the baptism. As they got into the car to leave, the pastor's friend overheard his wife tell her husband, "Okay, you can go by the church and practice baptizing me one more time, but remember, when you do your first funeral... *you're not going to practice on me!*"

Here was a pastor who was a bit too enthusiastic!

I baptized a man once who came to watch his wife and daughter get baptized. When he left for church that morning he had no intention of getting baptized.

He didn't bring a towel or swimsuit. Yet he was so moved by the Holy Spirit he took off his shoes, took out his wallet, and jumped in. He gave his life to Jesus in the pool, and I dunked him on the spot... *Baptism and Communion need to be enthusiastically practiced.*

**(Kathy and I)** I don't always get a kiss after baptizing someone, but baptism should always be enthusiastic...

*And as with any logo, baptism and communion should be carefully protected.* Over time symbols can easily get confused, and lose their original meaning.

When Pepsi Cola first took its product to Thailand they used the same slogan they had used in America, "Come alive, you're in the Pepsi generation." But when translated the Thai version came out a bit altered... *"Pepsi brings your ancestors back from the dead."*

Years ago, when Chevrolet went to Mexico to sell its compact car, the Nova, the marketing geniuses didn't realize the Spanish word "nova" can mean "*not going anywhere.*" Which makes a lousy name for a car.

My point is, a logo or symbol is ineffective if there's confusion about its meaning. That's why the clarity and definition of the logos of faith need to be preserved.

Christianity's trademarks have been cherished for two millenniums. They're "golden oldies," yet they can become mere formalities if we don't maintain their importance. We need to cultivate a fresh appreciation.

*That's why today, I want us to look at our logos...*

We'll look first at **Baptism**. And here's our threefold outline: *it's a lamp, a stamp, and a ramp.*

Then we'll focus on three aspects of **Communion**: *it's Hebrew, it's a glue, it's an avenue for blessing.*

First, let's *plunge* into **baptism**...

It's a **lamp** that shines a light on the mysteries of salvation... The *physical work of salvation* was performed by Jesus 2000 years ago on a Roman cross in a dim corner of the world called Judea. Whereas, the *spiritual work of salvation* is equally obscure. It occurs deep in our spirit. **In both cases there're no cameras.**

There were no cameras in 32 A.D, and none for the human spirit. Today, surgeons send micro-cameras, through blood vessels, to film the body's inner workings... yet no camera exists that can photograph the *Holy Spirit* as He transforms a *human spirit*.

Yet baptism shines a spotlight on salvation - what was done in the *distant past*, and in my *deepest parts*.

First and foremost, baptism illustrates Jesus' work upon the cross. Jesus plunged beneath the waters of death, and then victoriously surfaced three days later.

When I baptize someone rarely do I hold them under three days. Maybe I should at least count three seconds: 1,001, 1,002, 1,003 yet the imagery is clear...

God knows the power of a picture, and baptism portrays Jesus' death, and burial, and resurrection.

Baptism also shines a light on the inner workings of the Spirit of Jesus in our hearts. Colossians 2:12 puts it, "(We are) buried **with** (Christ) in baptism, in which you also were raised **with** Him through faith in the working of God, who raised Him from the dead."

In a spiritual sense a believer shares in the work of Jesus on the cross. Baptism symbolizes the death of our old, sinful nature - and the birth of a new man.

There's an ancient tradition that says the early church required the person being baptised to wear old, ragged, dirty clothes into the baptismal waters. Then after he or she emerged from the waters they changed clothes and put on new garments. It was a picture. **In Christ old things pass away - all things become new.**

Once, a pastor was performing an outdoor baptism. He was explaining its significance - when at that exact moment the sun hit his hand - and it cast a shadow.

He pointed to the shadow and reminded the crowd that the shadow was not his hand. It was just an image. Likewise, water baptism is just an illustration.

Water baptism is the shadow of the spiritual baptism that occurs when you repent of your sin and trust in the cross of Jesus. **The old you is *buried*. A new you is *born*!** As the old saying goes, "**Baptism is an *outward demonstration of an inward transformation*.**"

It reminds me of the fellow (*drunk as a skunk*), who stumbled across a church conducting a baptism. The country preacher grabbed the man, pulled him into the creek, and baptized him. When the guy came up, the preacher shouted, "**Boy, have you found Jesus?**"

The drunk fellow didn't know what to say so the pastor dunked him again. When he brought him up from the water he asked, "**Have you found Jesus yet?**"

He was speechless, so the preacher baptized him a third time... *holding him under a long while*. Again the preacher shouted, "**Boy, have you found Jesus yet?**"

This time the drunk fellow answered, "***No I haven't, but are you sure this is where He fell in?***" The country preacher mistakenly thought baptism would save this man. He was wrong. After baptizing the fellow three times all he ended up with was a soggy sinner.

**Salvation occurs *apart* from baptism.** No one has ever been saved because of baptism, and many have been saved without baptism. The thief on the cross for example - he who

was obviously never baptized - yet Jesus said, "Today you will be with Me in Paradise."

In Acts 10, Luke makes a point of telling us that when Peter visited Cornelius, the Roman was converted, filled with the Spirit, and made a member of the Church... before he was ever baptized with water.

### **Baptism is not an essential for salvation.**

If it were a requirement; then my salvation would be dependent on a religious act - something I did. That would nullify God's grace... Grace is love that's *on the house*. It's never dependent on me. It flows from God's heart. Our salvation is God's free gift. Rather than allocated on merit, salvation is received by faith alone.

Baptism shines a light on salvation, it's **a lamp**. But it's also a **stamp** - a mark of identification with Jesus.

Jesus knew no sin, yet He was baptized to identify with us - to show us that He was one of us - He was on our team... And one of the reasons we are baptized is to identify with Jesus. When we become Christians we become one with Christ and part of His family.

In 1 Peter 3:20-21 the global flood of Noah's day is used as a type of baptism. When Noah's family exited the Ark, in essence they were baptized into a new world. Likewise, our baptism acts as a new beginning for us. It's a landmark - it's a new starting point.

Baptism is a statement to our friends and family that our allegiances have changed. We've left behind this evil world and made our stake in the world to come.

It's interesting, **Noah** moved from an old world to a new world through water. **Israel** moved from slavery to freedom by passing through the Red Sea. The **second generation** of Israelis went from wandering to victory by passing through water – this time the **Jordan River**. And we, the Church, begin a new life through baptism.

When you're baptized (*in a sense*) you become a card-carrying member of the Body of Christ.

In the early church neither friend or foe took your commitment to Jesus seriously until you were first baptized. Think about it, how could you be considered much of a follower until you had taken the first step?

**The Didache** (which means "**The Teaching**") - a book written by the early church fathers - forbid a person from taking communion until they were first baptized. Apparently, baptism was a believer's membership card.

Again, *baptism is **never essential** to salvation*, but that doesn't mean it's optional. Survey the book of Acts and every convert was baptized - no exceptions.

NT scholar FF Bruce comments, "**The idea of an unbaptized Christian is simply not entertained in the New Testament.**" Baptism was the first step of obedience.

I think of baptism like a wedding ring.

When I catch baseballs sometimes the older kids throw so hard the ball hits my ring and hurts my finger, so I've been known to take off my wedding ring. But when I take it off it

doesn't mean I'm not married. Whether it's on or off *I'm a lawfully wedded husband.*

Nevertheless it's important to me that I wear my ring. It's the *stamp*, the mark I'm a married man. If I didn't have a legitimate excuse for not wearing my ring, my wife might think *I was ashamed of her - or I regretted my vows - or I was even making overtures to other women.* **That's why my wedding ring is important.**

And this is how Jesus feels about baptism. When we take our vows; then drag our feet about being baptized, Jesus has a reason to question our commitment.

Baptism is **a lamp, a stamp**, and a **ramp**. It's a ramp that leads upward - to greater spiritual experience.

Water baptism is a catalyst for spiritual growth.

It's *spiritual STP*. It's a high-octane additive. After a Christian is baptism their spiritual life seems to function smoother and cleaner. You skip less and run better.

I've found that to get baptized a person has to deal with their pride. And this alone encourages a person's growth in grace. For a person who likes looking hip, and being cool, and coming across sophisticated baptism is a humiliating experience. *Why let another person dip you under the water - it sounds dippy?*

But that's why you need to get baptized.

Humble yourself. Step over your pride. You're prioritizing the spiritual, godly side of your life. Obey God, and your Christian walk will pick up the pace!

It's interesting, in the book of Acts a connection exists between *water baptism* and *the baptism of the Holy Spirit*. When believers are baptism with water it seems to unlock a window of faith through which God pours out a larger measure of the Holy Spirit's power.

There's an interesting quote in the Erdman's History of Christianity. It reads, "From the third century, the Baptismal Service also included the laying-on-of-hands by the Chief Minister of the church, with a prayer that the candidate would receive the Holy Spirit..."

Though God's Spirit comes to live inside us at our conversion, the supernatural power of the Spirit is often poured on us at our baptism. It ramps up the power.

People often ask me, "Do you believe in baptism by immersion or sprinkling?" And I respond by saying, "If you want to be baptized the way the people in the book of Acts were baptized then you need to be immersed."

The Greek "bapto" means "to dip or submerge."

In Acts 8 when Phillip baptized the Ethiopian it required a body of water. We're told they went down into the water. NT baptism was a *divine dunk!*

Yet having made the case for immersion, I'm not sure it's that big a deal to God. Remember, baptism is *an outward sign of an inward change* - and sprinkling is also a type of our spiritual transformation. Hebrews 10:22 tells us, "having our hearts sprinkled from an evil conscience and our bodies washed with pure water."

In the OT the priest dedicated the furniture used in the Temple by sprinkling it with blood - and in Christ we too are sprinkled with His cleansing power... *thus, why wouldn't sprinkling also be an appropriate symbol?*

There have been several occasions, when for health reasons a person couldn't be immersed, and so I sprinkled them. **Jesus just wants you to be baptized!**

Here's an excerpt from the Didache, "Baptize as follows: Baptize in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit, *in running water*. But if you do not have running water, use whatever is available.

But if you cannot do it in cold water, use warm (for some reason, cold water was preferable). If you have neither, pour water on the head three times - in the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit..."

In other words, if you're in a desert you can sprinkle!

To sum up the Didache passage in one word it would be "**flexibility.**" If you're healthy and there's plenty of water, why not go all out and opt for full immersion!

But if you're confined to a wheelchair - or for some other reason you're prohibited from going under water - don't be condemned. God is cool if we sprinkle you.

The point is, when it comes to baptism what's most important is *not how you do it, but that you do it!*

*One final word about baptism...* The one area where the NT is **inflexible** is **infant baptism**. Nowhere does the NT teach or even mention baptizing babies.

The NT pattern is always: *repent, believe, and then be baptized*. It's always in that order. Baptism is always suppose to follow repentance and faith not precede it.

*Thus, how can a baby, be biblically baptized, if they're incapable of both repentance and faith?*

I believe infant baptism - even baptizing young children too early - can do more harm than good.

A parent doesn't want their child growing up with a false sense of security - *some kids think just because they've been baptized they must be a Christian...*

I was baptized as a kid before I truly surrendered my life to Jesus. That's why later on, after my conversion, I felt the need to be re-baptized as a true believer...

If you have a need to be water baptized, we have one scheduled the last Sunday in January. *I hope you'll plan on it, and follow the Lord in believer's baptism.*

But baptism is not Christianity's only logo - there's another, **communion...** And the first thing we need to note about participating in communion, or *the Lord's Supper*, is that its origins are **Hebrew**.

The first communion between Jesus and His disciples was actually a snippet of a Jewish Passover.

For centuries Passover represented Israel's exodus from Egypt - but at His last meal with His disciples Jesus reinterpreted their 1500 year-old tradition...

At a Passover Seder the father takes out three sheets of matzo, or unleavened bread, and pulls out the middle sheet.

He then breaks it, and wraps it in a linen napkin. He then hides it from the rest of the family... Later in the meal, the youngest child finds the hidden matzo, and is rewarded with a piece of candy...

*This annual ritual preached the Gospel of Jesus...*

Jesus is the middle person of the Triune God: Father **Son**, and Spirit... He was taken out of heaven and broken on the cross... He was wrapped in linen grave-clothes and buried or hidden beneath the earth...

The youngest disciple, John, was first to the tomb to find Him alive... Now when you receive the Bread of Life you're rewarded with the sweetness of salvation...

And it was over **this** piece of bread that Jesus said, "**Take, eat; this is My body.**" He gave it new meaning. The wide-eyed disciples couldn't believe their ears.

But in addition to the bread, Jesus held up a cup and said, "**Drink from it, all of you, for this is My blood of the New Covenant, which is shed for many for the remission of sins.**" This was actually the third cup in the Passover Seder. It was called, **the cup of redemption.**

For centuries this cup represented the blood of the Passover lamb... On that final night in Egypt, believers took an innocent lamb and spread its blood on the thresholds and doorposts of their homes. When the death plague saw the blood it *passed over* the house.

And again, Jesus shakes up a tradition. From now on His disciples are to view this cup as a reminder of *His* blood. Apply it by faith to the posts of your heart, and death *passes over* you. We're saved by *His* blood.

Yet the question arises, **what did Jesus actually mean** when He took the bread and cup and uttered the phrases... "**This is My body**" and "**This is My blood**"?

Over the history of the Church three different schools of thought have risen... Today, Roman Catholics teach a doctrine called **transubstantiation**.

They believe when the priest blesses the wafer and wine it literally changes substance - that what you're eating actually becomes the physical body and blood of Jesus. Most Protestants like myself, reject transubstantiation, *and for a number of good reasons..*

**First**, if this is what Jesus meant, in context His words would've made no sense. His body was there, present in the room. It would've been confusing to say *the bread He was holding was the body holding it*. If transubstantiation is the correct view, Jesus would've certainly taught it in a less confounding way. His words were obviously meant to be taken figuratively.

**Second**, Jewish Law - specifically Leviticus 17:3 - prohibited the drinking of human blood. Jesus certainly wasn't telling His disciples to violate the OT Law.

**Third**, in John 6:56, Jesus already established that eating His flesh and drinking His blood meant believing in Him. Eating and drinking are figurative language for receiving the Spirit of Jesus into your life by faith.

There are other groups, like Lutherans, who believe in what is call, **consubstantiation**. They stop short of teaching that

the wafer and wine actually become the literal body and blood of Jesus... rather they say that the body and blood are **with** the wafer and the wine.

In Latin “**con**” means “**with.**” Thus, Jesus’ actual body and blood surround the bread and wine, and are literally received with them when you eat and drink.

The problem though with both **transubstantiation** and **consubstantiation** is that each time communion is served the body of Jesus is sacrificed all over again.

This opposes Paul's teaching in Hebrews 9:26.

There he tells us that Jesus needs to be sacrificed only once - for all time. If He needed to be sacrificed every week at the communion table it would diminish the value of what He accomplished on the cross.

There is a third school of thought concerning the Lord's Supper. Other denominations, like Baptists, believe in what's called **simple representation.**

They believe the elements are merely a memorial to Jesus’ body and blood. Nothing special or spiritual goes on at the communion table. It's strictly symbolic.

I personally no more believe that, than I do the other.

In 1 Corinthians 10:16 Paul calls out an evil practice occurring in the Church. To placate pagan friends the Corinthians were participating in sacrifices to idols.

Paul warns the believers in Corinth... Though they're correct that an idol is just a stick or stone - there are demons behind the idol. Idolatry is satanically inspired.

And thus, the act of sacrificing to an idol brings the worshipper in touch with the demons behind it.

To illustrate the spiritual dynamic he was warning them about, Paul uses a holy experience. He says of the church's observance of the Lord's Supper, "The cup of blessing which we bless, is it not the communion of the blood of Christ? The bread which we break, is it not the communion of the body of Christ?"

The word "*communion*" implies a personal, close, intimate contact - a special and unusual fellowship.

In eating at the altar of an idol the Corinthians were inviting contact with devils, in the same way at the communion table they were fellowshiping with God's Spirit. In communion we spiritually interact with Christ.

Nothing happens to the molecular structure of the bread and wine - but spiritually a window of opportunity opens up for us to have unusual intimacy with Jesus.

Communion is a special opportunity to come to the altar of the Lord, and interact with the Spirit behind that altar - *the Holy Spirit*. Through faith we touch God's presence, and make contact with Jesus' healing power.

Here's how I put it, **Communion is not magical or a memorial, but its mystical.** Something spiritual happens in communion. **We commune with Jesus.**

Which leads me to my next point - communion is the **glue** that adheres believers. Paul goes on to tell the Corinthians,

"For we, being many, are one bread and one body; for we all partake of that one bread."

In the ancient world you were extremely careful with whom you ate. People ate from *common loaves*, and dipped in *common bowls*, and drank from *common cups*. When you ate with someone you shared germs.

This is why when people ate from the same loaf of bread they assumed they were becoming one - a bond was created. *And this is what happens at communion!*

When believers eat from the same table we become one. Communion is not only an opportunity for us to experience the Holy Spirit, but to cement our bond as brothers and sisters in Jesus. *It's spiritual glue*. Communion is the *glue* between me and *you*.

And lastly, Communion is an **avenue** for *blessing and healing* - both are available at the Lord's table.

In 1 Corinthians 11:29-30 Paul is speaking of communion when he points out that since the believers in Corinth were *"not discerning the Lord's body... many are weak and sick among you, and many sleep (a euphemism for death)."* Because they weren't rightly discerning of communion they were physically sick.

We're told in Isaiah 53:5 that it's by Jesus' stripes we are healed. Jesus paid for our healing on the cross.

What better opportunity, then; to receive healing than at the Lord's Table? There, our focus is on His broken body! If we *believe in Him*; then we'll *receive from Him*.

On communion, I have one more thought, *it's tragic to me how one misinterpreted word has muddied the waters of understanding for millions of believers, and stolen their enjoyment of the Lord's Supper...*

In the OKJV, 1 Corinthians 11:27, reads, "Whosoever shall eat this bread, and drink this cup of the Lord, **unworthily**, shall be guilty of the body and blood of the Lord. But let a man examine himself... for he that eateth and drinketh **unworthily**, eateth and drinketh damnation to himself, not discerning the Lord's body."

I grew up with a false interpretation of 11:27.

Our church interpreted this verse to mean if we were unworthy of Christ when we took communion, God might strike us dead! This is why some folks got sick.

We would spend time before we took the bread and cup, examining our hearts, confessing our sins, hoping this communion service wasn't our death sentence.

My notion of communion was like a game of Russian roulette. *What if I left something out of my confession, or what if I wasn't sincere enough, or pure enough?*

I approached the cup of communion like it was a cup of arsenic. It's no surprise, **I dreaded communion.**

Yet tragically, all my confusion was caused by a grammatical mistake... In 1 Corinthians 11:27 the word "**unworthily**" is an **adverb** describing the manner in which the bread and cup are to be taken, not an **adjective** describing the character of its recipient.

In the NKJ this matter gets straightened out. The passage reads, "Whoever eats in an unworthy manner will be guilty of the body and blood of the Lord."

The problem Paul was addressing had nothing to do with anyone being worthy of communion. Some of the believers in Corinth were coming to the Lord's table, jockeying for position - *acting selfishly* - pigging out and eating in excess. No one could ever be worthy, but people could participate in a respectful manner.

We need to remind ourselves that if we could be worthy enough for God, Jesus would have never have had to die in our place. It's not up to us to be worthy.

**No one can ever be worthy enough for a holy God.**

Our duty is to participate *in a worthy manner* - to take communion humbly, sincerely, gratefully, even joyfully - *always rejoicing in what Jesus has done for us.*

In some churches communion is called "**The Eucharist**" which is actually the Greek word for "**thankful.**" You take the bread and cup in a worthy manner when you receive them with a thankful heart.

Let me close with the story of a Scottish pastor.

Once, he was administering communion when he noticed a young lady with tears streaming down her cheeks. When she was served, she turned her head.

This girl refused to accept the bread and wine. She was paralyzed by guilt over her sins. The pastor spoke gently to her, and re-offered her the communion...

He whispered, "Take it lassie, it's for sinners."

And this is true of both communion and baptism....

The logos of Christianity are not symbols of our own worthiness, but tributes to Jesus' glory and grace...

Let's make sure they're always *carefully protected* and *enthusiastically practiced*... in Jesus' name!