

Why the Lord's Table (Communion) Should Be Restricted (closed)

Listed below are some questions for (Baptist) Universalist who believe in the invisible church to answer. In my discussions with the Universalist I have been told the following: **A.** There is a church (local) and then there is the True church (invisible) consisting of all the saved. **B.** There is a Spirit Baptism that places us in to this invisible church which is the body of Christ and then there is water baptism that is a confession of an outward sign of an inward change and is a prerequisite to join the local church.

In the Universalist Baptist view of the paradox of spiritual and physical, i.e. the Church and the True Church, Spirit Baptism and Water Baptism, I have a question. What would be the Paradox for the Lords Supper? According to the Universalist Baptist view, I can see the Lords table being exercised in the local assembly but what would be the spiritual invisible counterpart? If the Universalist Baptists are not careful, they will be completely Protestant in their spiritual beliefs with a Baptist name. The Universal Baptists are already two thirds of the way there. If one would study Calvin, Luther and the Catholic views of the Lords supper, they would have examples of a spiritual counterpart to an invisible Lords supper.

Another thing for the Universalist Baptist to consider is this. There are two ordinances given to the church, Baptism and the Lords supper. Because of the belief of a "Spirit baptism" that places all into the body of Christ, then the Lords table as the second ordinance **must be open to all** the saved and Spiritually baptized regardless of denomination or church membership. If is not open to all, then please be consistent and tell me why based on the Universalist Baptist views. What right would the Universalist Baptist have to refuse any saved person from the Lords supper based upon their belief system? According to their understanding, are they not all Spiritually baptized into the body of Christ? You must, according to your logic sit down and partake with professed "saved" Catholics, Presbyterians, Methodists, etc. for they are all Spirit baptized into the invisible body of Christ. If they have had Spirit baptism as the first ordinance, why can't they partake of the second ordinance being the Lords supper?

Protestantism has infiltrated our Baptist churches. These articles are only meant to be a help and to challenge the Universalist Baptist thinking to take a sobering look at their doctrinal views.

There are three options as pertaining to the Lord's Table (or supper): **Restricted** (closed) communion, **close** communion, or **open** communion.

Closed communion is only for the membership of a particular church and each participating member is known to be in good standing.

Close communion is for all that are saved and baptized and are of like faith.

However, I must state that those who practice "close" communion actually practice open communion because communion is during a public service. I doubt that a pastor of a Baptist church that practices close communion will stand up and say, "Will all the non Baptist people leave while we Baptist of like faith receive the Lords supper.

Open communion is for all, regardless of church affiliation.

Depending on the view that one may have concerning the church, the appreciation and

understanding of the Lord's Table will differ. Those who believe in the invisible church and that its beginning was in the book of Acts, will practice open/close communion. Those who believe that the church is only local and visible, and that the church was started and established during the ministry of Jesus Christ, will hold the view of restricted (closed) communion, which is only to be administered to its own membership who are in good standing.

The more one studies the subject of open and restricted (closed) communion, the more one finds that there are different views in regard to the subject of water baptism. Those who hold the view of open or close communion will most likely be very lax in their understanding and acceptance of water baptism from other churches which are not of like faith or practice.

We know that there are two ordinances given to the church. The first is baptism; the second is the Lord's Table, also commonly called communion. If one is open with the Lord's table, allowing any person to partake of the bread and the fruit of the vine, they will also accept the water baptism (immersion) from other denominations, for if both are ordinances, and if you allow one for all, then you must allow the other under the same principles of acceptance as well. I have also found that many who believe in the invisible church concept practice the acceptance of water baptisms from other non Baptist churches is arbitrary. Scriptural protocol is not used, but their opinion is the determining factor. However, those who believe that the church was started and established during the earthly ministry of our Lord Jesus Christ believe that the Baptism of John which was administered to our Lord, as well as to his apostles, is the same baptism that we have today and therefore hold to the more conservative view of perpetuity and authority of water baptism. This is one reason why we study our Baptist history and heritage. Again, I must mention that baptism is a church ordinance and whichever view the reader holds as to when the church was started, this will determine their understanding of the Lord's table and its importance.

There are several reasons why the scriptures teach restricted (closed) communion. One reason is because of the God-given responsibility of church discipline. Church discipline is the duty of a scriptural Baptist church body to enact and enforce the commandments and laws of Christ. This would involve the charge given to the church that the ordinances are to be kept as they were delivered.

1Ti 3:15 But if I tarry long, that thou mayest know **how thou oughtest to behave thyself in the house of God**, which is **the church** of the living God, the pillar and ground of the truth.

1Corinthians 11:2 Now I praise you, brethren, that ye remember me in all things, and **keep the ordinances, as I delivered them to you.**

While there is much to say on the subject, I believe that the justification of closed communion can be demonstrated with just one example of protocol in regard to the

Lord's table. In the verse below, a command is given by the Apostle Paul that we are not to sit and eat with a **brother** that is a fornicator, covetous, idolater, railer, drunkard, or extortioner.

1 Corinthians 5:11-13 But now I have written unto you not to keep company, if any man that is called a brother be a fornicator, or covetous, or an idolater, or a railer, or a drunkard, or an extortioner; with such an one no not to eat. (12) For what have I to do to judge them also that are without? do not ye judge them that are within? (13) But them that are without God judgeth. Therefore put away from among yourselves that wicked person.

As an example, if there is a man in the congregation of the church of which I am a member, and he is a fornicator or guilty of one of the offenses listed above, I as a church member, along with the entire church body, am commanded not to eat with him. (Eating is referring to the Lord's Table, also called communion.) Under the discipline of that local church body, that man is not to be allowed to sit at the Lord's Table and is denied access because we are commanded to cast out the leaven:

1 Corinthians 5:5-8 To deliver such an one unto Satan for the destruction of the flesh, that the spirit may be saved in the day of the Lord Jesus. (6) Your glorying *is* not good. Know ye not that a little leaven leaveneth the whole lump? (7) **Purge out therefore the old leaven that ye may be a new lump, as ye are unleavened.** For even Christ our passover is sacrificed for us: (8) Therefore let us keep the feast, not with old leaven, neither with the leaven of malice and wickedness; but with the unleavened *bread* of sincerity and truth.

Consider this question: If we are to have open or close communion and one comes into our assembly and sits at the Lord's Table for communion, how are we to know if he is not guilty of one of the above listed offences? Shall we deny access to one and allow another who are guilty of committing the same scriptural infraction? Each member is to be in good standing. Church discipline is to keep the ordinances as they were delivered.

If an individual comes into our assembly as a visitor from another church that is even of like faith and practice, and partakes of the Lord's table, and is under church discipline, we have no way of knowing. It is not the responsibility of my church to reach into the affairs of another church and investigate so he can partake. Some may not be aware, but this is the purpose of a "transfer of letter" for church membership from another scriptural Baptist church. This is to establish that the prospective church member desiring to untie with another scriptural Baptist church is not under church discipline. If he were, he would not be allowed to join until he first makes amends with the church that has him under discipline. It then stands to reason that if this person would not be allowed to join our church without such guidelines concerning a transfer letter, why should they be denied membership into our congregation but allowed to sit at the Lord's Table with us? Remember, both are local church ordinances. Being in good standing is vitally important

and needs to be maintained. This is a requirement to partake of the Lords table. The Lord's table is a local church ordinance and should be restricted or shall we say closed to "ALL" except those if its own members who are in good standing.

As one would study the scriptures, they will find that baptism administered within a scriptural local Baptist church or received from another scriptural Baptist church must be with the understanding that the essential doctrines are the same. This is why a baptism from a non Baptist institution i.e. Assembly of God, Bible Churches and others alike should not be allowed. The reason being, your baptism is only as good as your doctrine. This would cause a schism (division) in the body. Some may say that some these churches are Baptist! You can be Baptist and not be a Baptist.

Baptism and the Lords table are the safeguards of the local Baptist church. The ordinances are to be administered correctly with the understanding that scriptural Baptist baptism will keep out false doctrine and as a perpetual ordinance, the Lords table will help to maintain a membership that continues to walk in the newness of life as being dead to sin and alive unto God in all manner of conversation.

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