



NINEVAH MISSIONARY BAPTIST CHURCH

BAPTISM & COMMUNION

A GUIDE TO OUR ORDINANCES

WHAT WE PRACTICE • WHY WE PRACTICE IT • WHAT IT PROCLAIMS

BELIEVE. BECOME. BELONG. BEACON.

NINEVAH.ORG • BIRMINGHAM, ALABAMA

FOUNDATION

Ordinance, Not Sacrament

The distinction is more than semantic—it shapes what we believe is happening.

Many church traditions refer to baptism and communion as “sacraments.” At Ninevah, we intentionally use the word “ordinance” instead.

What Is a Sacrament?

A sacrament is understood, in many traditions, to be a means of grace in itself—the belief that when the act is performed, the literal thing being symbolized is actually occurring in that moment. Under this view, the elements of communion may be believed to become the literal body and blood of Christ, or the water of baptism may be believed to accomplish salvation or regeneration in and of itself.

What Is an Ordinance?

An ordinance, by contrast, is an act of obedience commanded by Christ that is symbolic. It represents and remembers something that has already taken place, rather than causing something to take place in the moment it is performed.

THE FINISHED WORK OF CHRIST

The bread does not become flesh. The water does not wash away sin. Christ already did the work, once, in history. Communion and baptism point back to that finished work; they do not repeat it, add to it, or complete it.

SACRAMENT	ORDINANCE
The act itself is believed to impart or convey grace; the literal thing is understood to be occurring.	An obedient, symbolic re-enactment of something Christ has already accomplished in history and in the believer's heart.
The elements or waters are understood to change in nature or effect.	The elements and waters remain what they are; their meaning is found in what they represent.
Participation itself is treated as a means of salvation or spiritual transformation.	Participation is a testimony and remembrance for those who are already saved by grace through faith.

OUR CONVICTION

Grace Through Faith—Alone

This is why Ninevah teaches that a person is not saved by being baptized, and a believer does not receive fresh grace by eating the bread or drinking the cup. We are saved by grace, through faith in Jesus Christ, alone.

“For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God: Not of works, lest any man should boast.”

— Ephesians 2:8–9

WHAT THE ORDINANCES DO

Baptism and communion are the two ways Christ commanded His Church to remember, proclaim, and testify to salvation—not to secure it.

ORDINANCE ONE

The Lord's Supper—Communion

“Do this in remembrance of me.”

On the night He was betrayed, Jesus took bread and a cup and gave His disciples a command that the Church has carried out ever since.

“And he took bread, and gave thanks, and brake it, and gave unto them, saying, This is my body which is given for you: this do in remembrance of me... This cup is the new testament in my blood, which is shed for you.”

— Luke 22:19–20

The Apostle Paul makes the pattern explicit: this is not a one-time event, but a recurring practice for the gathered church, done deliberately, as often as we come to the table, for the purpose of remembering what Christ has done.

“For as often as ye eat this bread, and drink this cup, ye do shew the Lord’s death till he come.”

— 1 Corinthians 11:26

THE HEARTBEAT OF COMMUNION

The words “as often as” and “in remembrance of me” remind us that communion is not ritual for ritual’s sake. It is a deliberate act of remembering, together, what it cost Jesus to save us.

AT THE TABLE

What We Remember

Three truths held together in one covenant meal.

- **The Broken Body** — Christ’s physical suffering on the cross, given willingly on our behalf. The bread represents His body, broken for us.
- **The Shed Blood** — The blood of Jesus poured out as the once-for-all sacrifice. The cup represents His blood, shed for the forgiveness of sins.
- **The Forgiveness of Sins** — Our sins are not covered by our own effort, but by what the cross accomplished: full and complete forgiveness through Christ alone.

The cross, the broken body, the shed blood, and the forgiveness of sins are not incidental details of communion. They are the core of what we believe as a church, and the covenant meal exists to keep them ever before us.

Why the First Sunday

Ninevah sets aside the first Sunday of each month for the covenant meal together as a congregation. We have found this rhythm to be the balance Scripture calls us to: frequent enough that the cross stays front of mind in the life of our church, but not so frequent that something this sacred becomes casual, routine, or overlooked.

OUR MONTHLY RHYTHM

Monthly communion asks us, again and again, to slow down and remember—without ever letting familiarity dull what it cost.

ORDINANCE TWO

Believer’s Baptism

An outward display of an inward reality.

Baptism does not save. Baptism does not create the change it represents—it displays a change that has already taken place.

When a person is baptized at Ninevah, they are testifying publicly to a decision already made privately in the heart: a decision to turn from sin, to walk with Jesus in newness of life, and to receive His finished, redeeming, forgiving work on the cross.

THE MESSAGE IN THE WATER

The Gospel Baptism Proclaims

Every baptism preaches the same gospel: Jesus Christ was not only crucified—He was buried in a borrowed tomb, and He rose bodily on the third day, defeating the law of sin and death once for all.

“For I delivered unto you first of all that which I also received, how that Christ died for our sins according to the scriptures; And that he was buried, and that he rose again the third day according to the scriptures.”

— 1 Corinthians 15:3–4

“For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life.”

— John 3:16

BURIED AND RAISED

Going down into the water pictures Christ's burial; coming up out of the water pictures His resurrection—and our own resurrection to new life in Him.

“Therefore we are buried with him by baptism into death: that like as Christ was raised up from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life.”

— Romans 6:4

An Act of Solidarity and Defiance

Baptism, in and of itself, holds no power. The water does not cleanse the soul, and the act does not transfer grace. But baptism is far from meaningless—it is an act of solidarity with Jesus Christ and open defiance against Satan's reign on the earth.

To be baptized is to declare, in front of witnesses, that you belong to Christ now—that you have crossed sides, and you are no longer neutral. It is an outward, public, unmistakable display of a decision that has already been made for Jesus Christ.

OUR PRACTICE

By Immersion

Ninevah baptizes by full immersion, not by sprinkling or pouring, because that is the pattern given to us throughout Scripture—a full picture of burial and resurrection, not a partial one.

“And Jesus, when he was baptized, went up straightway out of the water: and, lo, the heavens were opened unto him... And they went down both into the water, both Philip and the eunuch; and he baptized him.”

— Matthew 3:16; Acts 8:38

In the Name of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit

Ninevah baptizes in the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit. We do so first because this is the command Jesus gave His Church.

“Go ye therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost.”

— Matthew 28:19

We believe that the final, atoning work of Jesus Christ is fully sufficient for salvation. Yet Scripture also reveals salvation as the coordinated work of the triune God: the Father purposes and sends, the Son accomplishes redemption through His death and resurrection, and the Holy Spirit applies that work by drawing, regenerating, indwelling, and sealing the believer.

THE WORK OF THE GODHEAD

To reduce Christian baptism to only one Person of the Trinity would obscure the coordinated work of the Godhead in saving the believer. Trinitarian baptism honors Christ's command and confesses the full work of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit in our salvation.

We Do Not Baptize Infants

Because baptism is a testimony to a personal decision to follow Christ—a decision made by the one being baptized—Ninevah does not baptize babies or young children who are not yet able to understand and profess that decision for themselves.

CONVERSION COMES FIRST

Baptism follows conversion; it does not substitute for it, and it cannot be made on someone else's behalf.

A HELPFUL DISTINCTION

A Note on Baby Dedication

Baby dedication is not baptism, and the two should never be confused. Baptism is a display of a decision and commitment the individual has made for Jesus Christ. Baby dedication is a different commitment altogether—made by the parents, the pastor, and the church body—to raise the child in the way they should go.

In dedication, the parents commit to raise their child with Christian values, beliefs, and ways—and Ninevah, as a church family, commits to stand behind them in that calling. The child has made no decision yet; the promise belongs to the adults surrounding them.

PUTTING IT TOGETHER

Two Ordinances. One Finished Work.

	COMMUNION	BAPTISM
COMMAND	"Do this in remembrance of me."	Repent, believe, and be baptized.
SYMBOL	Bread and cup	Water and immersion
PROCLAIMS	Christ's body broken and blood shed	Christ's death, burial, and resurrection
PARTICIPANT	The gathered body of believers	A believer publicly confessing faith
EFFECT	Remembers and proclaims salvation	Displays and testifies to salvation

OUR CONFESSION

Neither ordinance saves us. Both point to the Savior. Through communion we remember His sacrifice; through baptism we publicly identify with His death, burial, and resurrection.

READY TO TAKE YOUR NEXT STEP?

If you have questions about baptism, communion, or would like to talk through your own next step in either, please reach out to the pastoral staff at Ninevah. We would be honored to walk with you.

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