

The Visibility of the Church

Baptism and Communion

Review

1. Through the church, God's manifold wisdom made known (Eph 3:10)
2. Church is made visible through:
 - a. Sons and Daughters who bear the renewed and renewing image of God
 - b. Structures and Functions (Offices, Roles, Responsibilities, Authority) and
 - c. Sacraments and Assemblies (Gathering, Baptism, Communion)
3. Tonight: "How do Baptism and the Lord's Supper make the church visible?"
4. In 45 minutes, we'll only dip a toe into the waters of baptism, but we'll do a deeper dive later on."
5. Likewise, we'll not be able to feast on the Lord's Supper but will only have time to whet our appetites for the future.

The Journey Ahead

- Signs and Seals
- Signs
- Seals
- Baptism as a Sign and a Seal
- Baptism “Buts...”
- Communion as a Sign and a Seal
- Communion “Buts...”
- Ligonier on Signs and Seals
- How does Baptism make the Church visible?
- How does Communion make the Church visible?
- A Word about Assurance of Salvation
- Psalm 87

Baptism and Communion - Signs and Seals

Westminster Confession of Faith (1646), Chapter XXVII (I)

Sacraments:

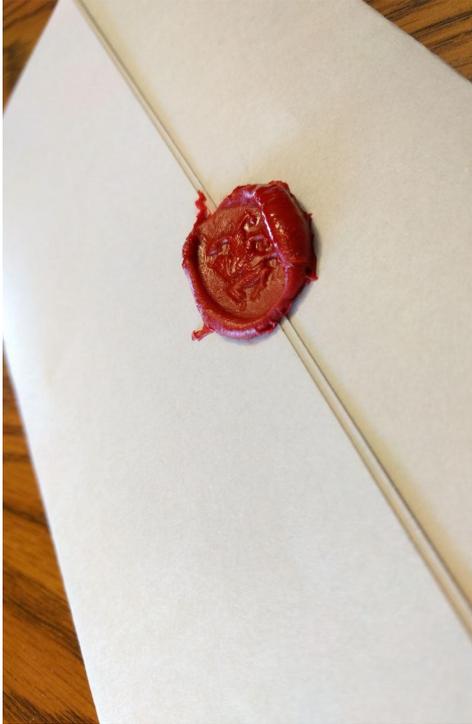
- *“are holy **signs and seals** of the covenant of grace,”*
- **Signs** - *“represent Christ and His benefits”*
- **Seals** - *“confirm our interest in Him”*
- **“put a visible difference between those that belong to the Church and the rest of the world;”**

Signs



1. A **sign** is a visible and tangible thing that points away from itself to something or someone else
2. We may not see the place or understand the thing represented or pointed to, but the **sign** helps us understand them better and/or chart a course towards them
3. A **sign** is not serving its purpose if we stand and admire it, and never look beyond it to see what it's pointing to

Seals



1. A **seal** is a mark of ownership. You can tell that something belongs to someone else when it is marked with his **seal**.
2. A **seal** validates a promise. It takes the thing **signified** and speaks to the believer of his or her personal interest in it. The personal appropriation of the blessings and promises **signified** in the sacrament is an outworking of this.
3. A **seal** is not serving its purpose unless we understand our interest in what is pointed to by the **sign**

So what we can say of a **sign** and a **seal** in the Bible?

“This is what it points to.....

and it's mine!!

(in Christ)

This is what it points to, and it's



Baptism as a **Sign** and a **Seal** (not exhaustive)

- Cleansing from sin by Christ's blood (washing with water - Acts 22:16)
- I'm cleansed from my sin by Christ's blood (*an interest in the Savior's blood*)
- The Holy Spirit (water) applies the merits of Christ's work (Gal. 3:24–29)
- The Holy Spirit has applied the merits of Christ's work to me
- An immersion (baptism) into the Holy Spirit (Acts 10:47)
- I've been baptized into the Holy Spirit (God's seal, earnest on me Eph. 1:13-14)
- Joining to invisible church (so water baptism joins to visible church) (1 Cor 12:13)
- I've been joined to the invisible church
- Death, burial & resurrection - descending into water; rising from it (Rom 6:3-4)
- I've died and been buried with Christ and raised to new life in Him (union)

Baptism - this is what it points to, and it's



Baptism “Buts...”

- The water is just water
- Baptism does not save
- The spiritual benefits of baptism are appropriated by faith on the part of the one being baptized
 - (they are not inherent in the water or person administering the sacrament)

Communion as a **Sign** and a **Seal** (not exhaustive)

- The death of Christ. The life is the blood. Pouring out from body pictures death (Leviticus 17:14)
- Christ's death (with all its benefits and blessings) was for me
- Souls are nourished and strengthened by Christ, who is their life, just as physical bodies sustained, invigorated by elements (1 Corinthians 10:16-17)
- My soul is nourished and strengthened by Christ, Who is my life
- Participation in & union with Christ, as elements consumed. (John 6:53-58)
- I am participating in and joined with Christ (1 Corinthians 10:16-17)
- Believers' union with one another, being joined to Jesus, the Head of the body (Romans 12:5).
- I am joined to my brothers and sisters in Christ - we're members one of another

Communion - this is what it points to, and it's



Communion “Buts...”

- Bread remains bread, wine remains wine
- Christ isn't physically present, but spiritually
- Christ isn't re-offered in the Communion
- No-one is saved by taking Communion
- Spiritual benefits of Communion are appropriated by faith on the part of the recipient
 - (they are not inherent in the elements or person administering the sacrament)

Ligonier on Signs and Seals

We are creatures with both physical and spiritual components. We understand what happens to us physically when we are washed with water and when we eat, and the sacraments portray spiritual realities to us by way of analogies with our physical experience. The Spirit truly washes us clean of sin, and we truly receive necessary spiritual nourishment from Christ. Baptism and the Lord's Supper help us understand these truths better.

<https://www.ligonier.org/learn/devotionals/signs-and-seals/>

How does Baptism make the Church visible?

It marks out as a **seal** of ownership (or should) the New Covenant Community (Jeremiah 31-34). If the promises and blessings are ours, we are His - we:

- whose sins are washed away through Christ's blood
- to whom the merits of Christ's work have been applied by the Holy Spirit
- who have been baptized in the Holy Spirit
- who have been joined to the invisible church
- who have died, been buried and raised to new life through union with Christ
- who have faith to see beyond the **sign** and to appropriate all the blessings and benefits **signified** in it

So baptism is to be an outward mark of those who are truly His - they have a credible profession of faith shown by their understanding of the true Gospel and the fruits of the Spirit are evident in their lives.

How does Communion make the Church visible?

It marks out as a **seal** of ownership (or should) the New Covenant Community (Jeremiah 31-34). If the promises and blessings are ours, we are His - we:

- for whom Christ died
- whose souls are nourished and strengthened by Christ, who is our life
- who are participating in and joined with Christ
- who are joined to their brothers and sisters in Christ - members one of another
- who have faith to see beyond the **sign** and to appropriate all the blessings and benefits **signified** in it

So the meal is to be a gathering (as far as possible) of those who are truly His - they have a credible profession of faith shown by their understanding of the true Gospel and the fruits of the Spirit are evident in their lives.

A Word about Assurance of Salvation

In their function as **seals**, the sacraments have an important role to play for us. They assure us that all the benefits and blessings of the Gospel are truly ours.

These are places where “it is the Spirit himself bearing witness with our spirit that we are children of God, and if children, then heirs, heirs of God and fellow heirs with Christ, provided we suffer with him in order that we may also be glorified with him. Romans 8:16–17

*My name from the palms of His hands, eternity will not erase;
impressed on His heart it remains, in marks of indelible grace.*

*Yes, I to the end shall endure, as sure as the earnest is giv'n;
more happy, but not more secure, the glorified spirits in heav'n. (Toplady)*

Psalm 87

On the holy mount stands the city he founded; the LORD loves the gates of Zion more than all the dwelling places of Jacob. Glorious things are spoken of you, O city of God.

*Among those who know me I mention Rahab and Babylon; behold, Philistia and Tyre, with Ethiopia— “This one was born there,” they say. And of Zion it shall be said, “This one and that one were born in her”; for the Most High himself will establish her. **The LORD records as he registers the peoples, “This one was born there.”***

Singers and dancers alike say, “All my springs are in you.”

Q & A - many for the deep dive / feast

- Who should/should not be baptized according to this understanding?
- Should church members all be baptized?
- Should true believers pray about whether to get baptized?
- What about baptism by effusion (pouring) or sprinkling?
- What about baptism of infants with believing parent(s)?
- What about one loaf, one cup in Communion?
- What about wine instead of grape juice?
- Who should/should not take Communion?
- Who should be members of a local church?