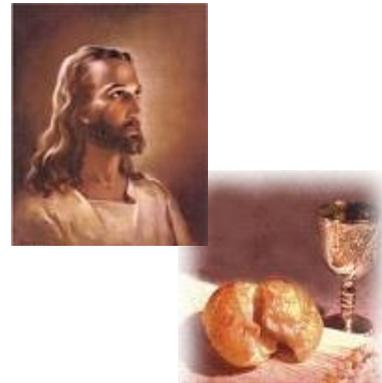


IYM Quakers

Session Two

Friends and the Sacraments



The Quaker Approach to Baptism and Communion

- *Friends and Baptism*
- *Friends and Communion*

Acts 1:5

Quakers believe in baptism! The non-practice of outward forms of water baptism doesn't point to something we don't believe. Rather it points to an understanding of baptism we embrace deeply.

In Acts 2 we read of a spiritual baptism that transformed a group of fearful, weak and inadequate believers into a powerful spiritual movement. While early Quakers don't have a single shared Pentecostal moment that is part of our history, one by one early Friends did experience the baptism of the Holy Spirit, resulting in individual lives that were transformed.



Out of this first-hand experience with the Spirit of God, Friends found that they were experiencing something that was clearly biblical and intended to be the norm for all Christians. Every one of the four gospels records John the Baptist's declaration that although he baptized with water, the one following him would baptize with the Holy Spirit. Jesus himself affirmed this in Acts 1:5. While Friends don't want to argue with other Christians who continue to use the rite of water baptism, we insist that at best it can only symbolize the spiritual baptism that is intended for all believers. At worst it may become an empty substitute for what God really desires each of us to experience.

Luke 22:17-19

Many Christian groups understand the words of Jesus in Luke 22:19 to be a mandate establishing a ritual to be repeated regularly when Christians gather. For some churches "The Lord's Supper" is observed each week while others do so monthly or quarterly or on special occasions.



Was Jesus establishing an ordinance that all Christians are obligated to observe? Some Christians believe this to be the case. Others believe that new meaning was simply being given to the Passover meal that was being shared by Jesus and the disciples.

As early Friends experienced first-hand the presence of Christ they came to understand that "communion" was not something intended to be practiced once a quarter or even once a week. Friends learned by experience that real communion with Christ was more than just remembering Him. For Quakers communion is a spiritual intimacy with Christ that is intended to be our experience moment by moment. Physical elements like bread and wine are no substitute for personal, spiritual, daily communion with Christ.

Friends and the Bible

We should acknowledge that the Friends approach to Baptism and The Lord's Supper originally arose out of their personal experience of Christ and their reaction against the emptiness of the ceremony-centered worship in the 17th century Church of England.

If the Friends approach is contrary to biblical teaching, however, this would be a problem. What early Friends discovered, though, was that the Bible clearly pointed to a "New Covenant" experience of Christ that couldn't be contained in ceremonies and rituals. This doesn't mean that Friends are the only ones who have discovered what the Bible really means. What it does point to is that Friends have an awareness of the spiritual depth that God desires all Christians to experience.

The Quaker Approach to Baptism & Communion

Many non-Friends find the Quaker approach to the sacraments perplexing, or even distressing. Nearly all other Christian groups practice some form of water baptism and regularly observe the ritual of The Lord's Supper, but Friends are different.

The Friends movement began at a time when there was significant emphasis upon external religious rituals, but little knowledge of personal Christian experience. This certainly contributed to Fox's spiritual unrest and his subsequent search for something more. He and many others in 17th century England had learned the creeds, attended church services, and participated in the prescribed rituals without finding a truly satisfying experience of God.

When early Friends found what their hearts had longed for all along, a relationship with God through Jesus Christ, they had no desire to embrace the ritualistic forms of worship which for them had been empty shadows of the real thing! They developed such a deep appreciation for spiritual baptism and communion that the outward forms seemed like hindrances to them.

Even today there are religious people who might depend upon a baptismal certificate rather than in Jesus Christ as the source of their salvation. Quakers point to the spiritual reality behind religious rituals. We have discarded the rituals but embraced the spiritual realities to which they point.