

The Church: Rites and Rituals S.S. Lesson

1. Welcome
2. Memory Text
3. Key Thought: God has instituted ordinances that, properly understood, help to reinforce our faith.”
4. And at the bottom there of the opening page we are told that this week we will be looking at three rites that express our faith: baptism, footwashing, and the Lord’s Supper.
5. And so with that let’s move to Sunday’s lesson entitled “Naming the Sacred Rites.”
6. As the lesson points out in the early church sacred rites were referred to in the Greek as mysterion or mystery. In the west where Latin predominated the term sacramentum (Latin) or sacrament was used to describe these rites.
7. We here who live in Sacramento, that name is simply the Spanish word for sacrament.
8. Sacrament or Sacramento are not bad words. The reason we don’t use this word sacrament is because of the way it was used in the Middle Ages.
9. It was used to describe some things we would feel comfortable with, but in all there were 7 rites described as sacraments in the church of the day. And some of those 7 are not things we feel comfortable with because of their un-biblical associations.
10. The seven include: baptism, confirmation, Holy Eucharist, Penance or Confession, Anointing of the sick or last rites, Holy Orders and Matrimony.
11. You can see by this list why the Protestant world at least has chosen to move away from the term sacrament. In its place we use the word ordinance.
12. A statement at the bottom of Sunday I believe is worth reading where it says this. “However much importance we place on the ‘ordinances,’ we must always remember that these are not conduits of grace or acts by which we earn salvation or gain merit before God.”

13. We don't partake of a sacrament or ordinance in order to be accepted by God. We partake as an expression of faith and as an opportunity to grow in grace and understanding of God's will.
14. The children of Israel allowed the ceremonial services to become the all in all to them, thinking that these rituals saved them rather than the real purpose of pointing them to the Savior who only could save them.
15. As I think about the three ordinances we are discussing this week it is hard for me to imagine that any of them would become to us what the ceremonial rituals had become to the children of Israel.
16. I say that first of all because baptism for the most part is a once in a life time experience. We could have some misconceptions about baptism at the time we are baptized, but if we continue in the faith I believe we all would grow in our understanding of this ordinance that the rite itself does not save us.
17. And as far as foot washing and communion or the Lord's Supper, we don't do it daily, or weekly or even monthly, usually three or four times a year. That is not conducive of becoming a legalistic ritual.
18. In fact I think we are apt to lose the importance of these ordinances rather than make them more than what they are. And so with that concept in mind let us move to Monday and begin with the wonderful experience called baptism.
19. First of all what does the word baptism mean? To immerse, go under. As we know that is significant in the fact that people who say they have been baptized and have only been sprinkled with water or had a little water poured on them really haven't been baptized, at least not according to the meaning of the word or the Biblical concept of baptism.
20. One might wonder how it was that John the Baptist used this rite as a means of representing cleansing from sin since baptism is more of a New Testament ordinance.
21. Well according to various Jewish writings baptism was used in Old Testament times as a means of receiving proselytes to Judaism. And so it was that the Jewish leaders didn't question the validity of baptism, they just questioned his authority to use it. For example in John 1:25 it says this.

22."And they asked him, and said unto him, Why baptizes thou then, if thou be not that Christ, nor Elias, neither that prophet?" So we can see by this that if he had been the Messiah or a prophet then baptism would have been okay.

23.They just didn't think he qualified being such a simple man of the wilderness that he was. He didn't have the credentials they think he needed.