The Ordinance of the Lord’s Supper

This is the second of two ordinances give to the New Testament local church, the first being that of Baptism. Like Baptism, Baptist type people look at the observance of the Lord’s Supper as only that of a memorial nature. Baptists stand in stark contrast to Catholics and Protestants in that the Lord’s Supper is an ordinance given and not a ceremony that is sacerdotal and sacramental in nature.

What the Bible Says

Luke 22:19  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.

1 Corinthians 11:24  And when he had given thanks, he brake it, and said, Take, eat: this is my body, which is broken for you: this do in remembrance of me.

1 Corinthians 11:25  After the same manner also he took the cup, when he had supped, saying, This cup is the new testament in my blood: this do ye, as oft as ye drink it, in remembrance of me.

In obedience to the scriptures then, we are to determine to observe the Lord’s Supper but given no specific time of repetition. When we choose as a local church assembly, we are to do so clearly as a remembrance and thus the idea of the service being memorial only in nature and not sacramental (doesn’t confer or impart salvation or saving grace, etc... to any participant).

Primary False Teaching: Transubstantiation

which is that the bread and wind are changed by the words of the consecration into the actual substance of the body and blood of Christ

Transubstantiation

This false doctrine concerning the Lord’s Supper was first taught in the ninth century by Paschasius Radbert and was not proclaimed official Roman Catholic doctrine until the Fourth Lateran Council in A.D. 1215. The council of Trent in the 16th century reaffirmed this doctrine and gave a more developed statement of belief regarding transubstantiation. This false doctrine is supposedly based on the following passage of scripture.

John 6:47-59
47 Verily, verily, I say unto you, He that believeth on me hath everlasting life.
48 I am that bread of life.
49 Your fathers did eat manna in the wilderness, and are dead.
This is the bread which cometh down from heaven, that a man may eat thereof, and not die. 
I am the living bread which came down from heaven: if any man eat of this bread, he shall live for ever: and the bread that I will give is my flesh, which I will give for the life of the world. 
The Jews therefore strove among themselves, saying, How can this man give us his flesh to eat? 
Then Jesus said unto them, Verily, verily, I say unto you, Except ye eat the flesh of the Son of man, and drink his blood, ye have no life in you. 
Whoso eateth my flesh, and drinketh my blood, hath eternal life; and I will raise him up at the last day. 
For my flesh is meat indeed, and my blood is drink indeed. 
He that eateth my flesh, and drinketh my blood, dwelleth in me, and I in him. 
As the living Father hath sent me, and I live by the Father: so he that eateth me, even he shall live by me. 
This is that bread which came down from heaven: not as your fathers did eat manna, and are dead: he that eateth of this bread shall live for ever. 
These things said he in the synagogue, as he taught in Capernaum.

Usually verse 53 is simply quoted by itself as the proof text for transubstantiation. The problem with this of course is that the context of this passage itself, the book of John, and the entire New Testament shows the doctrine of transubstantiation to be completely false.

The book of John is a book that sets out to show that Jesus is the Eternal God become flesh (John 1:14 And the Word was made flesh, ....) The book of John centers around seven statements that Jesus made about himself – these are the “I AM” statements, one of which is in the above passage (I AM the bread of life .v 48). These seven statements are:

1. I am the bread of life (John 6:35, 48) 
2. I am the light of the world (John 8:12) 
3. I am the door (John 10:9) 
4. I am the good shepherd (John 10:11) 
5. I am the resurrection and the life (John 11:25) 
6. I am the way, the truth, and the life (John 14:6) 
7. I am the true vine, and my father is the husbandman (John 15:1)

It should be obvious that these statements are to be taken as a spiritual teaching tool, that being the use of illustration, and that we are not to believe that Jesus is literally physical bread, light, a door, a shepherd of real sheep, and a real green vine. To do so would miss the implied spiritual lessons of understanding that unless we take of the bread of life (Jesus), believe what he says and refuse the darkness of the world (light), go through the only way, the only “door” that leads to salvation (Jesus), etc... we will not inherit eternal life, but eternal death.
Con-Substantiation

This false teaching was popularized by the reformer Martin Luther. Not able to accept any longer the transubstantiation taught by the Catholic institution he was separating from, Luther developed this idea expressed as:

“the real and corporeal presence of Christ in the Supper; so that while the bread and wine were not changed by the words of consecration, yet the body and blood of Christ were mystically united with them”

Luther’s Catechism, by the way, shows what he believed regarding the Lord’s Supper by the following statement:

‘Sacrament of the Altar’ [the Lord’s Supper], ‘namely, that in the Sacrament forgiveness of sins, life, and salvation are given us through these words.’

Holy Eucharist

Catholic and Anglican institutions call the Lord’s Supper the Holy Eucharist. They believe that they are literally sacrificing Christ again each time they have the supper. The Anglican Book of Common Prayer states:

**Question:** Why is the Eucharist called a sacrifice?
**Answer:** Because the Eucharist, the Church’s sacrifice of praise and thanksgiving, is the way by which the sacrifice of Christ is made present, and in which he unites us to his one offering of himself.

Differences Among Baptist

There are differences among Baptists regarding the Lord’s Supper primarily not in how the practice is carried out or what is believed about the supper, but in who can participate.

Some Baptist churches would require Baptism and church membership before being allowed the privilege of partaking of the Lord’s Supper. This practice might be called restricted or closed communion. Other churches, like ours, invite people who are truly born again believers (with no requirement for baptism or membership in our local church) to participate in the Lord’s Supper. This practice is commonly called “close” communion.

These differences among Baptists have caused for some amount of controversy and division. The open denial of participation, for those practicing closed or restricted communion, have caused offence to a visiting pastor or people from the Baptist church down the way.
Baptist Distinctive: The Lord’s Supper

Again we have seen that there is a great difference between the Baptist practice of the ordinance of the Lord’s Supper and the sacramental system of the Catholics and Protestants. We believe that the service is memorial in nature only and may be summarized using the “Four-fold Look” of the Lord’s Supper:

1. Look Back (to the Lord’s sacrificial death for our sins)
2. Look Around (at your local body of believers, your family in Christ, and be reminded that we are not merely individuals but that we are the family God)
3. Look Forward (“till he come” – anticipate the return of Christ!)
4. Look Inward (judge your own spiritual condition and relationship with the Lord)