




SUNDAY LESSONS
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This Month's Topic:
**Ordinances and
Covenants**

WHAT DO YOU SEE?

When we study and ponder the symbols in gospel ordinances, our thoughts center on Jesus Christ.

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Because symbols are all around us, we often don't think about them very much. But paying closer attention to gospel symbols can be a key to greater understanding.

The scriptures use words like *type, shadow, emblem, token, sign, parable, remembrance, witness, or testimony* to describe something that is meant to point our thoughts toward something else (see Moses 6:63). For instance, when Jesus introduced the sacrament at the Last Supper, He gave His

disciples the broken bread they were to eat and said, "This is my body which is given for you: this do in remembrance of me" (Luke 22:19). Now, obviously the bread was not literally His body; as He said, it is meant to *remind* us of His body—and *much more*. That's what makes symbols so powerful—they communicate without language and trigger a number of related thoughts all at once, adding depth and meaning.

Of course, ordinances are not

merely symbolic gestures; they carry real power to bless us through the authority of the priesthood. But they also contain symbols that teach us about the Savior and about our covenants. Even the act of submitting to and receiving a priesthood ordinance is an outward sign of a person's faith and humility. Here are many of the symbols connected with the ordinances of baptism, confirmation, and the sacrament, as well as some of the ideas associated with them. ■



BAPTISM

Water: washing, cleansing, purification from sin

White clothes: purity (“there can no man be saved except his garments are washed white . . . [and] purified . . . through the blood of [Christ]” [Alma 5:21]); equality (whether rich or poor, all wear the same clothing at baptism, for “all are alike unto God” [2 Nephi 26:33])

Raised right hand: reaching up toward heaven, witnessing to heaven; also a token of an oath (see Genesis 14:22; Daniel 12:7)

Immersion: the death, burial, and Resurrection of Christ (see Romans 6:3–4); our spiritual rebirth in Christ (“born of water” [John 3:5])

CONFIRMATION



Laying on of hands: physical touch by those representing God, transferring blessings from God to others

Receiving the gift of the Holy Ghost: called “baptism of fire” (see 2 Nephi 31:13); cleansing and spiritual rebirth in Christ

SACRAMENT

Eating bread: remembering the body of Jesus Christ (see Matthew 26:26–29), the bread of life (“he that cometh to me shall never hunger” [John 6:35], “he that eateth of this bread shall live for ever” [John 6:58])

Kneeling to pray: humility, submitting to God’s will; a token of the everlasting covenant (see D&C 88:131)



Breaking bread: Christ’s bodily suffering on our behalf, His physical death, His Resurrection so that we might live again

Placing bread and water before the congregation: emblems of Christ’s sacrifice, which ended sacrifice by the shedding of blood (see Alma 34:13–14); we now bring a “sacrifice unto the Lord . . . of a broken heart and a contrite spirit” (D&C 59:8)

Drinking water (originally wine): the blood of Christ (shed in Gethsemane, during His sufferings at the hands of the soldiers, and on the cross), which “cleanseth us from all sin” (1 John 1:7) and “is in the covenant of the Father unto the remission of [our] sins” (Moroni 10:33); blood as “the seat of life or vital energy of all flesh” (Guide to the Scriptures, “Blood”; scriptures.lds.org) and that which atones for sins through sacrifice (see Leviticus 17:11); living water (see John 4:14)



FOCUSED ON THE ATONEMENT

“Every ordinance of the gospel focuses in one way or another on the atonement of the Lord Jesus Christ, and surely that is why this particular ordinance [of the sacrament] with all its symbolism and imagery comes to us more readily and more repeatedly than any other in our life.”

Elder Jeffrey R. Holland of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles, “This Do in Remembrance of Me,” *Ensign*, Nov. 1995, 67.

JOIN THE CONVERSATION

THINGS TO PONDER FOR SUNDAY

- How do the symbols in the ordinances of baptism, confirmation, and the sacrament help you remember the Savior and your covenants?
- What goes through your mind during the sacrament each week?

THINGS YOU MIGHT DO

- Write in your journal about something you thought or felt during the sacrament.
- In church, talk about a symbol in the sacrament and how it helps you remember the Savior.