

BAPTISM IN REDEEMER

A paper on the theology & instructions regarding Biblical baptism

Table of Contents

BAPTISM IN REDEEMER	2
THE BASIS OF BAPTISM	2
WHEN DO I NEED TO GET BAPTISED?	3
WHAT IS BAPTISM?	3
HOW TO BAPTISE?	4
WHAT ABOUT CHILD BAPTISM?	4
WHAT ABOUT OUR INFANT CHILDREN?	5
WHAT ABOUT RE-BAPTISM?	7
SUMMARY ABOUT BAPTISM	8
PRACTICAL INFORMATION	9

BAPTISM IN REDEEMER

When you read this paper, we assume you want to get baptised or are considering it. We hope this information will help you understand what true Biblical baptism is about and why this is one of Redeemer's values.

There are few more controversial subjects, more divisive or more abused in Christendom today than the doctrine of baptism. By many Christians baptism is relegated to a place of virtual insignificance. By others it is totally ignored as a non-essential. By still others it is regarded as the entrance into church membership. Some esteem it to be an indispensable condition for one's salvation.

But what do the scriptures teach?

The first thing which can be assuredly asserted from the Word of God is that it is a command of the Lord.

THE BASIS OF BAPTISM

To His small band of faithful followers the resurrected Christ, just prior to His ascension, said:

All authority has been given to Me in heaven and on earth. Go, Therefore, and make disciples of all the nations, baptising them in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I commanded you; and lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the age.

~ Matt. 28:18-20

Here is a solemn responsibility for the apostles, and, after them, the Bible teachers and elders of the church. It is their responsibility to baptise those who have become followers of Jesus Christ. The "Great Commission" is not to evangelise. It is to "make disciples." How is this done? The process begins with evangelism which leads to conversion. Those converted are to be baptised and discipled. The commission requires the teaching of baptism to the new converts and suggests that discipling is not complete without baptism. The practice of baptising others, then, is based directly on the command of our Lord.

Here is an ordinance for the Christian church. If an ordinance is simply a ritual or a rite prescribed by our Lord, practised in the early church, and expounded by the apostles in the epistles of the New Testament, then baptism is certainly an ordinance. It was given by our Lord (Matt. 28:18-20). It was widely practised in the early church (Acts 2:41;

8:36-39; 9:18; 10:47; 16:33; 18:8; 19:5). It was expounded by the apostles in the epistles (Rom. 6:1-6; 1 Pet. 3:18; Heb. 6:1). The ordinance of baptism, then, is based directly on this command of the Lord.

Here is an obligation for everyone who becomes a disciple of Jesus Christ. It is very difficult to avoid the importance of baptism in the New Testament. If you are concerned about obeying the Lord, if you are concerned about following the New Testament, if you are concerned with living in fellowship with the Lord and pleasing Him, you will be concerned about baptism. It is a command of the Lord.

WHEN DO I NEED TO GET BAPTISED?

True Biblical baptism follows after repentance and faith in Jesus, there is no other way around. It's confessing with your mouth that Jesus Christ is Lord and that you need him to save you from your sinful nature.

37 When the people heard this, they were cut to the heart and said to Peter and the other apostles, "Brothers, what shall we do?" 38 Peter replied, "Repent and be baptised, every one of you, in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins. And you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit. 39 The promise is for you and your children and for all who are far off—for all whom the Lord our God will call." 40 With many other words he warned them; and he pleaded with them, "Save yourselves from this corrupt generation." 41 Those who accepted his message were baptised, and about three thousand were added to their number that day.

~ Acts 2:37-40

WHAT IS BAPTISM?

Identification is the secondary meaning of the Greek verb which was transliterated into English "baptise." This is clear from 1 Corinthians 10:2 where we read that "all were baptised into Moses in the cloud and the sea." The events of the Exodus separated the children of Israel from Pharaoh and Egypt unto Moses. They were identified with him, under his leadership.

Identification is the primary meaning of all other forms of baptism in New Testament times. When a proselyte was baptised he was identifying himself with Judaism. In the baptism of John the Baptist an Israelite was identifying himself with John and the repentant remnant who were awaiting the coming of the Messiah. When our Lord was baptised, He was identifying Himself with the believing remnant in one sense, with guilty sinners in another sense, and the work of Calvary and redemption in still another sense. When a believer is baptised by the Holy Spirit, he is so identified with Christ that he is "in Christ" (Rom. 6:1-6). He is also so identified with the Body of Christ, His Church, that he

becomes a member of His Church, a part of His body (1 Cor. 12:13). So CHRISTIAN BAPTISM is an identification. He is identifying himself publicly with Jesus Christ. He is declaring his personal faith in Him. He is acknowledging that he is depending upon Jesus Christ and His death alone for his salvation. He is saying, "I am a believer. I belong to Jesus Christ. I am on His side." In the days of the early church they had no decision cards, no altar calls, no raising of hands. It was by baptism that one identified himself with Christ as a Christian.

HOW TO BAPTISE?

We believe the New Testament is clear. Every indication is that baptism was administered in the early church by immersion.

The primary meaning of the Greek verb BAPTIZO is "to immerse" or "to dip" (Arndt & Gingrich). In non-Christian literature it also meant "plunge, sink, drench, overwhelm, etc." The Greeks used the verb for the dyeing of a garment in a pot. In secular literature it was used to describe a boat which had been wrecked by being submerged. Without translating it, this verb was transliterated in the authorised version "baptise". The reason is transparent. Sprinkling was already in use in Britain and widely accepted. To translate the verb "immerse" would have declared the truth but contradicted the popular practice of the Church of England. The transliteration "baptise" avoided this contradiction.

The renowned Jewish scholar Alfred Edersheim describes the baptism of a proselyte to Judaism in detail. It was a baptism by immersion. This was the mode of baptism the early Church knew. What could be more normal than for them to take this mode over into Christianity? The baptism administered by John the Baptist was also by immersion (Matt. 3:16; John 3:23). The practice of the day would suggest baptism by immersion in water.

WHAT ABOUT CHILD BAPTISM?

Often we are asked about our children. How old should a Christian child be before he is baptised? Who ought to take the initiative toward his baptism, the child or the parent? After much contemplation and experience, we have developed several personal convictions. If it is to be a significant and meaningful act, the child must understand the biblical teaching on the subject. It would be a disservice to him, an abuse of the ordinance and an affront to the Lord to baptise him before he understands its basic significance. He will spend the rest of his Christian life growing to understand its full significance, but the basic meaning ought to be comprehended before he is baptised.

Also, if it is to be a public expression of his identification with Christ in His death, burial, and resurrection, there ought to be some evidence of genuine conversion in his life.

False professions are too commonplace among children with Christian parents. Is there evidence of spiritual life? Who better can observe this than the Christian parents.

The decision to be baptised surely must be the decision of the child in response to the Bible teaching of his parents and the inner prompting of the Holy Spirit. A good friend of mine has said, “The best teacher a child will ever have is his father.” As the God-ordained head of the house, the father bears the primary responsibility to teach his children. In conjunction with teaching them the gospel he will teach the doctrine of baptism. He may do it formally or informally, as a family or individually, but he will do it.

One of the most effective ways I have found is to discuss the subject together as a family over supper during the week prior to a baptismal service. Through the week he may cover five questions: Who (the candidates)? Why (the meaning)? When (the time)? How (the mode)? What (the results)? One question a night is sufficient. With review quizzes, probing questions, and personal experiences this can be a very exciting time and will make the Sunday baptism very meaningful to your children. As a godly parent so teaches his child, he will earnestly pray for the Holy Spirit to stir the heart of his child to respond. Then baptism will be an act of obedience to the Lord and His Word. You have helped him develop a pattern of responding to the Word under the influence of the Holy Spirit. This pattern will mould his life!

WHAT ABOUT OUR INFANT CHILDREN?

If Christian baptism is a believer's baptism there is no place for the baptism of infants.

In his Systematic Theology, A. H. Strong has enumerated several reasons which are worth considering for rejecting the baptism of children before they are believers.

There is no biblical basis for such a practice. There is not one clear example of it anywhere in the New Testament. Admittedly, the household was baptised along with the Philippian jailer (Acts 16:33). But we are distinctly told in the following verse that he believed “in God with all his house.” This seems to indicate they all became believers. Besides the absence of any clear example of infant baptism there is the absence of any clear command in the New Testament to justify it. Matthew 19:14 does not mention baptism nor does it refer to it. Christian baptism had not yet been instituted! First Corinthians 7:14 surely does not teach it either. If baptism is here in relation to the children, then one must also say the unbelieving husband is also saved! Who would admit this? On the baptism of infants the scriptures are silent. There is neither precept or precedent in the New Testament for such a practice.

Furthermore, the notion of infant baptism is a contradiction to the scriptures. What is its purpose? To some it is the removal of original sin. This is a contradiction of 1 John 1:7. It is the blood of Christ which cleanses from sin. To others it is the way into the church. This is a contradiction of 1 John 5:11-13. The church is composed of Christians, men and women who have believed in Jesus Christ and possess eternal life. Even Martin Luther saw the conflict here. To our amazement he taught justification by faith while he held to infant baptism. He went on to say that the infant was justified by faith at its baptism! To still others it is a dedication of a child to the Lord. Every parent is to be commended for such a desire, but we must never confuse dedication and baptism.

According to A. H. Strong, the testimony of history is that infant baptism did not rise until the mid-second century and early part of the third century in the midst of a sacramental conception of Christianity. As a result, we have already observed that many of the arguments for it are virtually the arguments for baptismal regeneration.

Perhaps the most difficult point to answer is the relationship between circumcision and infant baptism.

Advocates of infant baptism maintain it has superseded circumcision. This is only an assumption. It is true of course that both are signs. But we must not forget that while circumcision was the sign of the Abrahamic Covenant, the cup of the Lord's Supper (not baptism) is the sign of the New Covenant. If baptism superseded circumcision, why did Paul have Timothy circumcised? The only text that places them together is Colossians 2:10-12:

And in Him you have been made complete, and He is the head over all rule and authority; and in Him you were also circumcised with a circumcision made without hands, in the removal of the body of the flesh by the circumcision of Christ; having been buried with Him in baptism, in which you were also raised up with Him through faith in the working of God, who raised Him from the dead.

There is no indication here that baptism has taken the place of circumcision. It only suggests that what circumcision was physically - a cutting off of the flesh, baptism illustrates spiritually - a putting off of the flesh. This verse is not even speaking of physical circumcision.

We are inclined to agree with the Paulicians of the fourth century who opposed infant baptism saying it was Satan's number one back door for getting pagans into the church.

WHAT ABOUT RE-BAPTISM?

Recently someone expressed their desire for baptism. They then proceeded to explain their reason for the desire. They had been baptised many years ago as a believer but only recently had they come to understand the significance of it. Now they wished to be re-baptized.

On many occasions we have been asked to re-baptize believers who had been restored from a life of sin and disobedience. They thought they ought to be re-baptized.

There is no indication in the scriptures that believers were ever re-baptized. That is, the instructions and examples of the New Testament indicate that believer's baptism is a single episode in a Christian's life. Who of us fully understood the significance of baptism when we were baptised? If we have been growing in grace we surely understand much more today than we did then. Shall we be re-baptized? Surely not. Shall we who have been restored from backsliding be re-baptized? The way of restoration is plainly presented in 1 John 1:9. There is no mention of re-baptism. Every indication from the scriptures is that believer's baptism was not a rite to be repeated. As baptism emphasises our entrance into the Christian life, it is to be done only once.

However, the New Testament does mention a 're-baptism'. A remarkable incident occurred in Ephesus. According to Acts 19:1-5 some who had previously been baptised into John's baptism, when they heard of the coming Christ, believed and "they were baptised in the name of the Lord Jesus" (v. 5). This would certainly suggest that a person who has been baptised by any form of baptism other than believer's baptism ought to be 're-baptized' as a believer after he is converted.

In the strictest sense, of course, this is in fact not re-baptism because the first "baptism" (infant baptism or baptism as an unbeliever) was not a legitimate or biblical baptism at all.

SUMMARY ABOUT BAPTISM

BELIEVERS BAPTISM

We believe that Biblical baptism is a believer's baptism, so there's no place for infant or young child baptism. There must be a clear understanding of repentance and faith as a base for baptism.

REPENTANCE & FAITH FIRST

True Biblical baptism follows after repentance and faith in Jesus, there is no other way around it. It's confessing with your mouth that Jesus Christ is Lord and that you need Him to save you from your sinful nature.

Baptism is a follow-up response and a natural step of obedience after you have said yes to Jesus. Following Jesus is following His commands and example → Jesus gave the example as He got baptised Himself.

DEMONSTRATION

Baptism is a way of publicly demonstrating the reality of what God has done for you in your heart in front of MANY WITNESSES.

DECLARATION

It is a visible declaration of you saying I belong to Christ and identifying with Him.

VISIBLE REPENTANCE

It is all about publicly showing that you are turning from your old life and beginning a new one.

LEAVING BEHIND - A BURIAL

¹² We have been buried with him in baptism, in which you were also raised with him through your faith in the working of God, who raised him from the dead. ¹³ When you were dead in your sins, God made you alive with Christ. He forgave us all our sins, ¹⁴ having cancelled the charge of our legal indebtedness, which stood against us and condemned us; he has taken it away, nailing it to the cross. It is a symbol of the death and resurrection of Jesus, you leave your old life behind in the water.

~ Colossians 2:12

HE MADE YOU ALIVE - A NEW LIFE

As you come out of the water, this represents the way that Jesus has raised them up to a new life, a new beginning.

CLOTHED WITH CHRIST

Baptism is powerful

Galatians 3:27 - *for all of you who were baptised into Christ have clothed yourselves with Christ.*

BAPTISED INTO THE BODY (of Christ)

first the global church, but also the local church

1 Corinthians 12:13

For we were all baptized by one Spirit so as to form one body—whether Jews or Gentiles, slave or free—and we were all given the one Spirit to drink.

BY IMMERSION

BAPTISM = BAPTIZO to IMMERSE – a lot of water

It is by immersion - BAPTISE means immerse (greek)

John 3:23 - *Now John also was baptising at Aenon near Salim, because there was plenty of water, and people were coming and being baptised.*

PRACTICAL INFORMATION

Times: Redeemer has 2 opportunities of Baptism each year: one in June and one in September. We can consider a winter baptism on demand.

Info meeting: prior to baptism, Redeemer organises an information evening to talk through this document and to get you ready for baptism. Also this is a place for people who want to know more about baptism to ask their questions.

Location: We prefer baptising outside in the river Maas, but this is dependent on the weather conditions. Usually we combine it with a bbq at FunValley in Maastricht, which has a great beach for baptism.

Clothing: You do not need to wear special clothing. Please do think about the way you dress (especially women). Make sure it is appropriate and doesn't show too much body skin.

Family & Friends: baptism is a great opportunity to invite friends and family and let them be part of your public demonstration of faith. Please let us know how many people you expect to invite.

Testimony: Part of getting baptised is sharing why you want to get baptised. Please write down a little bit of your journey and be encouraged to share about your faith in Jesus. Please keep it within 3 to 5 minutes. If you find it difficult to put it into words, we would love to help you.