

BAPTISM

AN IN-DEPTH LOOK



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Introduction

Disagreements concerning water baptism have divided Christians for almost 500 years. Many people have strong emotional views concerning baptism, but we must be guided by what the Scriptures say.

“ All Scripture is God- breathed and is useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting and training in righteousness” 2 Timothy 3:16

The Lord wants unity to grow between His people until they come into the fullness of the truth. **“Make every effort to keep the unity of the Spirit through the bond of peace...until we all reach unity in faith”** Ephesians 4,3,13.

History and Abuses of Baptism

Jesus instituted and commanded His followers to baptize as an initiation into a life of discipleship. Matthew 25:19-20

The early church zealously propagated the faith through baptizing and teaching. Acts 2:37-41, 8:12, 36-39, 9:18, 10:47-48, 16:15,33, 19:5. Infants also were baptized.

“First the little ones should be baptized. All who can speak for themselves should speak. For those however who cannot speak, their parents or another who belongs to their family should speak.” (Hippolytis, c. 215 A.D.)

“The church received a tradition from the Apostles to give baptism to infants too” (Origin, c 240 A.D.)

“The whole church practices infant baptism. It was not instituted by councils, but was always practiced” (St Augustine, c.310 A.D.)

Some in the early centuries of the church baptized just before death, considering baptism a cleansing only for sins previously committed.

In the 4th century A.D. Emperor Constantine declared Christianity the official religion of the Roman Empire by fiat. Over the next several centuries – ‘the Dark Ages’ - thousands of people were baptized into the church without ever being ‘born-again’ or even understanding the gospel. Baptism became a ‘gimmick’ to get to heaven. Whole villages were baptized, sometimes even with the point of a sword.

In the 16th century the Anabaptism was an automatic ticket into heaven. They totally rejected infant baptism, insisting that people must intellectually understand salvation before they could be baptized.

Today a 'once baptized – always saved' attitude is still very prevalent in many mainline churches.

Scriptural Principles to Follow

Since it is vital that we base all doctrine and practice concerning baptism on Scripture, three basic principles for interpreting Scripture must be followed:

- Let Scripture interpret Scripture – let clear passages interpret unclear passages
- Take plain, simple meanings of words – don't try to twist or force certain meaning into a passage.
- Consider all Scriptures on a subject before making a stand or doctrine.

Don't add or subtract from Scripture. We can stand solidly on the unembellished, complete word of God. Nothing more, nothing less.

Purpose of Baptism

Baptism is an initiation into the Kingdom of God. **“Go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in (lit. Greek ‘into’)**

the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you” Matthew 28:19-20.

Baptism is commanded by Jesus and given as the official, outward sign or seal that a person now belongs to Jesus. Romans 4:11, 6:2-4, Galatians 3:26-27, Acts 2:38,41.

People were baptized immediately upon hearing and receiving the gospel. Acts 2:41, 8:35-39.

Old Testament circumcision and New Testament baptism were given as initiating signs of their respective covenants. Genesis 17:9-14, Romans 4:11, Colossians 2:11-12, Matthew 28:19-20.

Benefits of Baptism (when combined with faith)

In the Old Testament people were cleansed by two things;

Blood and Water. Exodus 229, Leviticus 17, Numbers 8:7, 19:13,20. In the New Testament people were cleansed by three things; Blood, Water and Spirit (I John 5:6-8).

1. Buries the old life – Romans 6:2-4, Colossians 2:12
2. Cleanses from sins – Acts 22:16, 1 Corinthians 6:9-11, Ephesians 5:25-24
3. Puts on Christ - Galatians 3:26-27
4. Part of remission of sins – Acts 2:38, Romans 6:3, 5-7.
5. Imparts salvation – 1 Peter 3:20-21, Titus 3:5, John 3:5
6. Entrance into the body of Christ (the church) - - 1 Corinthians 12:13

Conclusion: Baptism according to the New Testament is more than a mere outward symbolism and identification with Christ. It is not a mere church rite, but a divine ordinance to be observed by all Christians until the end of time. (Mark 16:15-16; Matthew 28:19-20)



Age and Qualifications for Baptism

A. NO ONE, INCLUDING CHILDREN AND INFANTS, HAVE A NATURAL RIGHTEOUSNESS

- All mankind lost its natural righteousness when Adam fell into sin. Genesis 3:9-19, Romans 5:12-19, Psalm 51:5. Adam, after the fall, had children in his own likeness, after his sinful image - no longer after God's image. Genesis 5:3
- Infants, just as all men, are sinful by nature. Ephesians 2:13 does not say we are sinful by deliberate acts of sin. Genesis 8:21, Jeremiah 17:9, Romans 3:23, Romans 7:17-18.
- Jesus said, **“Everyone must be ‘born again’ to enter the Kingdom of God”**. John 3:3,5. He makes no age distinction.
- Jesus is the only way to righteousness and salvation. John 14:6, Acts 4:12, Romans 3:20-28.

CONCLUSION: The popular belief that children are naturally innocent and unaccountable for their sins is unscriptural. Therefore children and infants, as well as adults, need God's plan of salvation, which includes baptism.

B. BAPTISM IS FOR BELIEVERS, BUT LITTLE CHILDREN (INFANTS) CAN BELIEVE.

- God can work faith in the heart, bypassing the intellect. 1 Corinthians 14:14.
- Infants can have faith. Matthew 18:6 **“these little ones (*MIKRON* - under age 3) who believe in me..”** Psalm 22:9-10 **“thou didst make me trust when upon my mother's breast”** 2 Timothy 3:15...**“from an infant (*PREPHOS*) thou hast known the Holy Scriptures..”**
- Infants (*MIKRON*, *BREPHOS*) and children (*PADION*) can receive or be part of the Kingdom of God. Matthew 18:15-17, Psalm 22:9-10, Psalm 71:5-6.

C. INFANTS CAN BE INCLUDED IN GOD'S COVENANT OF GRACE

- Infants were brought to Jesus. Matthew 19:13-15, Luke 18:15
- Baptism and circumcision are interrelated as initiating rites into a covenant with God.
- God's promise of salvation and baptism includes children. Acts 2:28 **“the promise is to you and your children”** In Matthew 28:19-20 children are included in **“all nations”**
- Entire families – **“households”** – were baptized together in the New Testament. Lydia and her family in Acts 16:15 **“.. she and the member of her household were baptized..”** The Philippian jailer and his family in Acts 16:31-33 **“.. he was baptised at once with all his family.”**
- Infants were included in Moses' baptism. 1 Corinthians 10:2.

D. BAPTISM IS FOR THE HOUSEHOLD OF FAITH

1. **“Teaching”** is directly tied to **“baptizing”** in Jesus' command to **“make disciples”**. Matthew 28:19 -20. Unless we have reasonable assurance that a child will be brought up in the Christian faith we cannot responsibly baptize him.
2. In the “household” accounts, parents were always believers. Acts 2:38-39, Acts 16:15,33.
3. Children are **“sanctified”** through their parent's faith. 1 Corinthians 7:14.

CONCLUSION: In accordance with the Scriptures and the early church, we confess the divine ordinance of baptism is for everyone, including infants. And, since Christ commanded His holy apostles and thus the entire Christian church to baptize “in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit,” this form of baptism must be employed by the Christian church today. We must also never separate Baptism from Christ; it exists only because Christ commanded it, and it is efficacious only because it rests on His atonement for our sins on the cross, by which He secured all the spiritual blessings that are offered in baptism. God is truly working in Baptism, by it the baptized enters into communion with the Triune God and into grace.

Questions about Baptism

A. DOES BAPTISM AUTOMATICALLY GUARANTEE AN INDIVIDUAL’S SALVATION?

A. No. God looks at the heart, even as He did with circumcision. **“He is a Jew (Christian) who is one inwardly, and real circumcision (Baptism) is a matter of the heart”** Romans 2:25-29 “He who believes and is baptized will be saved” **Matthew 16:16**

B. CAN OR SHOULD A PERSON BE REBAPTIZED IF HE WAS BAPTISED AS A CHILD, BUT NOT RAISED IN THE FAITH AND CONVERTED LATER AS AN ADULT?

1. The basic Scriptural principle is that of only **“one baptism”** Ephesians 4:5
2. The Lord’s Supper and not rebaptism is meant to be the act of rededication for Christians.

C. WHAT HAPPENS TO UNBAPTIZED BABIES WHO DIE?

The Bible does not answer the question directly. However, there is no verse that says un-baptized infants are condemned. Jesus said **“whoever believes and is baptized will be saved, but whoever does not believe will be condemned”** Mark 16:16. Notice that it is unbelief, not lack of baptism that damns. In fact, children of believing parents seem to be in a special relationship with the Lord. **“Otherwise your children would be unclean, but as it is, they are holy”** 1Corinthians 7:14

We can also be sure that God will judge fairly. **“shall not the Judge of all the earth do right?”** Genesis 18:25

D. MUST A PERSON BE IMMERSED IN ORDER TO BE FULLY BAPTISED?

The method of baptizing or the amount of water is not spelled out in the Scriptures. The Greek word "baptise" has several different meanings which include “to dip, immerse, wash”. There is Scriptural foundation for three main methods of baptizing.

1. SPRINKLING

“I will sprinkle clean water upon you and you shall be clean” **Ezekiel 36:25-27**

2. WASHING/POURING

“I will pour out my Spirit upon your descendants” Isaiah 44:3

“through the washing of regeneration” Titus 3:5

“be baptized and wash away your sins” Acts 22:16

3. IMMERSING

“We were therefore buried with Him through baptism” Romans 6:4. Matthew 3:16, Mark 1:9-10, Acts 8: 38-39

Cross Pointe will facilitate the above methods of Baptism as desired by the individual.

CONCLUSION

- According to the Scriptures baptism is more than mere outward symbolism and identification with Christ. It is a divine ordinance and as it is connected to God’s Word, it is efficacious. Certain blessings can be expected along with baptism.

- Regardless of age, the one baptized enters (through faith) into communion with the Triune God. God's favour falls on those baptized.
- Baptism is for believers but babies can also believe and be included in God's covenant of grace.
- Baptism alone does not guarantee salvation. All Scriptures are clear that a living faith is required for salvation.
- Baptism is often connected to one's membership in a visible Christian community.



Biblical Basis for Baptizing **Making Disciples - Teaching**

In Matthew 28:19-20 Jesus told His disciples to **“go and make disciples of all nations, baptising them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you”** **“If you continue in my word, you are truly my disciples”** John 8:31 **“and anyone who does not carry his cross and follow me cannot be my disciple”** Luke 14:27

There are two aspects of making disciples of Jesus Christ, baptising and teaching. For adults this teaching takes place through regular Bible study and church attendance.

For children, this “teaching” takes place through the parents by:

1. Their own example of Christian devotion and
2. Their regular church and Bible study attendance. (including children in Sunday school)

So, it is important that you consider your own relationship with God, Have you come to the place in your spiritual life where you know for certain that, if you were to die today, you would go to Heaven? The Bible clearly states that we can know for certain. **“I write this to you that you may know that you have eternal life...”** 1 John 5:13.

Are you living in a right relationship with God? **“just as He who called you is Holy, be Holy in all you do”** 1 Peter 1:15.

How do you receive the Gift of Eternal Life

- **ACKNOWLEDGE** “ for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God” Romans 3:23
- **REPENT** “Unless you repent, you too will all perish” Luke 13:3 “ Repent then, and turn to God, so that your sins may be wiped out” Acts 3:19
- **BELIEVE** “For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him shall not perish but have eternal life: John 3:16
- **CONFESS** “ If you confess with your mouth, ‘Jesus is Lord’ and believe in your heart that God raised Him from the dead, you will be saved” Romans 10:9
- **RECEIVE** “To all who received Him, to those who believed in His Name, He gave the right to become the children of God.” John 1:12

Know God loves you. Jesus has paid for your sins. The Scriptures are clear, “For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life.” This is for you!

You may wish to use this prayer.

“Lord Jesus, I believe You died for my sins and I ask for Your forgiveness. You are my personal Savior, please be with me in the days ahead, and manage my life from this day forward. Thank You for the gift of Eternal Life. Amen.”

If you just prayed this prayer, or if you have any further questions about Baptism or Cross Pointe, please call Britt Kerr at 667-1224, or email Britt Kerr at britt@crosspointechurch.ca

Arranging for the Baptism

Contact the church office to establish a date for the baptism and give us some basic information for our records. [Please note, we desire to baptize infants soon after they are born.]

Contact those who will be willing to stand as sponsors for your child (children). We encourage you to select active Christians for this important responsibility. The role of sponsors is to:

1. Stand up in the child’s behalf at the Baptism.
2. Pray regularly for the child until older.
3. Be a Christian example to the child.

About Sponsorship

Baptism is a time for joy in the lives of God’s people and especially for those chosen to be sponsors. Although Scripture does not require their presence at the baptism, the church has entrusted sponsors with an important role, especially for children.

Why have Sponsors?

Persecution and other uncertainties in the lives of the early Christians made baptismal sponsorship a practical necessity. Parents chose sponsors who would be responsible for their child’s Christian education in the event the parents themselves were imprisoned or put to death. Fortunately this is not likely the case today, but sponsorship has remained as a mantle of warmth and concern for Christian children. As God receives the child into fellowship and forgiveness, so we, as members of the family of believers, receive that same child. As we celebrate this new life, we accept the responsibility of providing guidance, instruction and love.

What do Sponsors do?

It is natural for Christian parents to feel the need and responsibility to plan for their child’s spiritual growth. So they carefully choose faithful Christians to share in this important privilege.

Those who present the child for baptism promise to diligently and faithfully teach the child the Ten Commandments, the Creed, and the Lord’s Prayer, bring the child to services in God’s house and provide instruction in the Christian faith. And so sponsors and parents are mutually involved in the Christian education of the child.

The task of a sponsor is not complete when the baptismal service is over. That is an important day, but it is only the beginning. The sponsor will want to help the child remember his or her baptism as a means by which God offered forgiveness and welcomed him or her into the body of Christ.

One effective way for the sponsor to care for the child is to pray often for the child. Also, use the God given opportunity to be a witness to the faith and help keep God’s Word central in the child’s life. Be an example of righteousness for the child, sharing with him or her the salvation you have been given through Jesus Christ.

One practical suggestion for sponsors is to give Christian books, CDs or gifts on the anniversary of the Baptism or on the child’s birthday to help the child grow in faith.

Along with the parents who love and care for the child, the sponsor can be someone whom the child recognises as having strong Christian convictions and is a trustworthy confidant with whom to share joys and sorrows. Together they can live in God’s covenant of grace and in communion with His church

What about the future?

Does the responsibility of the sponsor ever end? It probably never does. Later in the child's life, confirmation may mark the completion of an introductory phase of Christian education. This will be an opportunity for the child's own affirmation of his or her baptismal covenant. The meaning of Baptism will continue to unfold within the circle of God's constant action of renewal and forgiveness.

If you would like to have more information or would like to plan a baptism please contact
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