

Chapter 49: Baptism

Who should be baptized?

How should it be done?

What does it mean?

Definitions:

1. Ordinance or Sacrament?
2. Major Doctrine?
3. Believer's (Baptistic) or Infant (Paedobaptist) Position:
 - Grudem's position is Baptistic – namely, that baptism is appropriately administered only to those who give a believable profession of faith in Jesus Christ.
 - Louis Berkhof's Systematic Theology responsibly advocates the paedobaptist position (“infant baptism”)

A. The Mode and Meaning of Baptism

1. The Greek word baptizw (*baptizō*) means “to plunge, dip, immerse” something in water.
2. The sense “immerse” is appropriate and probably required for the word in several NT passages (Mark 1:5; Mark 1:10; John 3:23; Acts 8:36; Acts 8:38-39)
3. The symbolism of union with Christ in his death, burial, and resurrection seems to require baptism by immersion (Rom. 6:3-4; Col. 2:12)
 - Objection: The essential thing symbolized in baptism is not death and resurrection with Christ, but purification and cleaning from sins. (Titus 3:5; Acts 22:16)
 - Response: To say that washing away of sins is the only thing (or even the most essential thing) pictured in baptism does not faithfully represent NT teaching. (Col 2:11-12; Rom 6:1-11)

B. The Subjects of Baptism

1. The Argument From the New Testament Narrative Passages on Baptism. (Acts 2:41; Acts 8:12; Acts 10:44-48; Acts 16:14-15)
2. The Argument From the Meaning of Baptism: The outward symbol of beginning the Christian life should only be given to those who show evidence of having begun the Christian life (Gal. 3:27; Rom. 6:3-4; Col. 2:12)
3. Alternative #1: The Roman Catholic View - Baptism should be administered to infants, as baptism is necessary for salvation, and that the act of baptism itself causes regeneration. (see Ludwig Ott, *Fundamentals of Catholic Dogma*, 355-356; also See also: *Catechism of the Catholic Church* (1994), sections 1213, 1215, 1250, 1263-1266)
 - Catholic doctrine and practice concerning baptism:
 - 1) Baptism is ordinarily administered by a priest, yet in unusual circumstances a deacon, layperson, or even an unbeliever may perform baptism
 - 2) Sacraments work apart from the faith of the people participating in the sacrament:
 - Response To Roman Catholic View:
 - 1) Salvation depends on faith alone – not on faith plus works. (Eph. 2:8-9; Rom. 6:23)
 - 2) The debate about baptism is similar to that of Paul's argument concerning circumcision (Gal. 1:6; Gal. 3:10; Gal. 5:4)
 - Conclusion: No work is necessary for salvation, and therefore baptism is not necessary for salvation.

What about John 3:5?

1. Best understood against the background of the promise of the new covenant in Ezekiel 36:25-27:
2. A Spiritual Washing (Titus 3:5; Eph. 5:26)

What about 1 Peter 3:21?

1. "An appeal to God for a good conscience" = a request for forgiveness of sins and new heart
2. In baptism, we make such an appeal

4. Alternative #2: The Protestant Paedobaptist View: (Baptism is rightly administered to all infant children of believing parents)

- i. Infants Were Circumcised in the Old Covenant:
- ii. Baptism is Parallel to Circumcision (Col. 2:11-12)
- iii. Household Baptisms (Acts 16:15; 1 Cor. 1:16; Acts 16:33; Acts 2:39)

- Response to Arguments for Paedobaptism:

1. Baptism and circumcision, though similar, are also different in some important ways:
2. The NT does not talk about a "covenant community" made up of believers and their unbelieving children and relatives and servants.

- Physical elements were only a shadow of what is to come:

<u>OT Elements</u>	<u>NT Elements</u>
Physical Birth	Spiritual Birth (John 3:5-8)
Fed on manna	Fed on Christ (John 6:48-51)
Physical water	Spiritual water (John 4:10-14)
Physical temple	Spiritual temple (1 Peter 2:5)
Physical sacrifices	Spiritual sacrifices (1 Peter 2:5)
Physical land	A heavenly one (Heb. 11:16)
Abraham's physical seed	Spiritual descendents (Gal. 3:29)

3. Examples of household baptism: evidence is not decisive for one position or another (Acts 16:32-34; 1 Corinthians 1:15-16, 16:15; John 4:53; Acts 18:8; Acts 2:39-41)
4. "What does baptism do?"
5. Concern about Practical Consequences

C. The Effect of Baptism

- Joy from public profession of one's faith
- Joy from reassurance of having a clear physical picture of dying and rising with Christ and washing away sins.
- Strengthens and encourages our faith

D. The Necessity of Baptism

E. The Age for Baptism

1. Are the child old enough to give a believable profession of faith?
2. Is there convincing evidence of genuine spiritual life?
3. Is there some degree of understanding regarding the meaning of trusting in Christ?

F. Remaining Questions:

1. Do Churches Need to be Divided Over Baptism?
2. Who Can Baptize?