

# Why Do We Baptize Infants?

In order for us to be saved, God must come to us because we are unable to come to Him. *"No one can come to Me unless the Father who sent Me draws him ..."* (John 6:44)



**How does God come to us?** How does He draw us? How does He deliver His grace to us? So that we may participate in God's wonderful salvation it has pleased Him to come to us *through His Word and Sacraments.*

**What is a Sacrament?** A sacrament is a holy act, instituted by Christ, in which by visible means, He gives and confirms His invisible grace.

**What were the rites of the Old Testament** which *foreshadowed* the sacraments of the New Testament? *Circumcision* was the means chosen by God to include people in His family. Was circumcision a guarantee of always being part of God's family? Absolutely not. Circumcision held no benefit without faith.

Every adult who was baptized in the New Testament was a believer; they already had faith in Christ. The question was ... *"What to do with their children?"*

## Understanding Baptism

- Level 1 The Holy Spirit working through MEANS
- Level 2 WORD as MEANS
- Level 3 Baptism is another form of the WORD (*the Word connected to water*)

Just as God made provision to include children in the Old Covenant, He has now included them in the New Covenant through Baptism. Paul teaches us that in the New Testament baptism has replaced circumcision. (Colossians 2:11-12) It is comforting to know that God has brought the Gospel to children in a form which they can receive.

Children don't need to change and become like adults in order to enter into heaven. On the contrary, *adults must change and become like little children* to enter into heaven. Matthew 18

The sacrament of Baptism delivers grace to us. (Acts 2:38-39; 22:16)

## Why do we baptize infants?

1. Jesus commanded "all nations" to be baptized. No age is excluded – Matthew 28:18-20
2. Babies are sinful – Psalm 51:5
3. Baptism delivers forgiveness – Acts 2:38, 22:16
4. Infants can believe – Luke 18:15-17
5. It's the only means revealed for infants
6. Whenever households are present, they are baptized – Acts 15:16, 16:33
7. Baptism replaces circumcision – Colossians 2:11-12

## History of Infant Baptism

From the beginning of New Testament Christianity at the Feast of Pentecost (Acts 2:38-39) to our time, unbroken and uninterrupted; the church has baptized babies. Entire households (Jewish, proselytes, and Gentiles) were baptized (I Corinthians 1:16; Acts 16:15, 33) and that practice has continued with each generation.

### The Early Church

*Polycarp* (69-155), a disciple of the Apostle John, was baptized as an infant.

*Justin Martyr* (100 - 166) states that Baptism is the circumcision of the New Testament.

*Irenaeus* (130 - 200) Jesus "came to save all through means of Himself - all I say, who through him are born again to God - infants and children, boys and youth, and old men."

## Church Councils and Apologists

*Origen* (185 - 254) ... "For this also it was that the church had from the Apostles a tradition to give baptism even to infants." "Infants are to be baptized for the remission of sins."

*Cyprian* (215 - 258) ... "Should we wait until the eighth day as did the Jews in circumcision? No, the child should be baptized as soon as it is born"

*Augustine* (354 - 430) ... "The custom of our mother church in baptizing infants must not be . . . accounted needless, nor believed to be other than a tradition of the apostles."

## The Witness of the Catacombs

The witness of the early church fathers, councils and apologists for the practice of infant Baptism receives valuable confirmation from the catacombs and cemeteries of the Middle East, Africa and southern Europe. We have epitaphs from the 200's of infants who had been baptized. *It is interesting to note that there are no Christian epitaphs in existence earlier than 200.* As soon as the era of Christian Inscriptions begins, we find evidence for infant Baptism.

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It is not true that children cannot believe. By their natural power they cannot ... but neither can adults.

Nowhere in the Bible is there anything written *limiting* the words "all nations" according to age or sex. Jesus' command lists "baptizing" them as the first way to make disciples and "teaching" them as the second way. This clearly indicates the Christian church's practice of baptizing children first and instructing them later as they grow in understanding.

Luke 18:15-17 - *People were also bringing babies to Jesus ... for the kingdom of God belongs to such as these ... anyone who will not receive the kingdom of God like a little child [baby] will never enter it.*

FAITH is entirely the gift of the Holy Ghost in the heart of an adult or an infant. The Holy Ghost can work faith in infants in any way he chooses. Jesus warns adults not to let their reason and understanding get in the way of believing like a little child. (Mark 10:15).

- ✓ If infants are sinful and need forgiveness ...
- ✓ If forgiveness is delivered through baptism ...
- ✓ If this promise is also for the children of believers ...
- ✓ If infants can believe (*and are the model for adults*) ...
- ✓ If there is no command (or even hint) to exclude them ...

*Why exclude our young ones from such a gracious gift?*

## Questions to Consider

1. Who is acting in Baptism?
2. Is the recipient of baptism givable?
3. Primarily an issue of the LAW or of the GOSPEL?

## Can a baptized person fall away from God?

Mt. 10:22;24: 10-13 Lk. 8:13 J. 15:1-6 Ro. 11:21-22 1 Cor. 15:2 Gal. 5:4 Col. 1:23  
1 Tim. 1:19; 4:1 2 Tim. 2:18 Heb. 3:12-14

Baptism is not the *end* ... but only the *start* of the life of a disciple. Our children, as well as we, need to *continue* to walk daily *by faith* in Christ our Savior!