

Understanding Baptism



Key verse: Matthew 28:19.

Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing 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.

Kick Off

Sometimes what is meant to bring unity causes division. Consider 'Daylight savings', what was the government's intention in introducing it? Why has it caused so many problems? What could be a workable solution to the issue?



Study

Big Idea: Soaking people with the message of our Triune God's plan of salvation is genuine Great Commission type baptism.

STUDY

The sacraments have been the cause of awful division among Christians since the dawn of Christianity, see 1 Corinthians 1:13-17 if you need convincing of this. This study on baptism and the following one on the Lord's Supper will no doubt be interesting so please be gracious and prayerful. And start by reading **Ephesians 4:4-6**.

1. How many baptisms are there and what is the focus of our life?

Although the bible emphasises unity in the **one baptism**, today there is basically two strong opinions regarding baptism. The mode and importance of water-baptism cause some division but the adults verses children issue is the greatest sticking point. One position holds to baptism being only for believers capable of a personal confession of faith. The other position holds to baptism being for believers and their children. Very simply this is the reasoning behind the two positions... ***the more baptism is seen as the expression of the baptised person's faith, the harder it is to hold to infant baptism. The more baptism is seen as the expression of God's divine grace, the easier it is to argue for infant baptism.***

As evangelical Christians all agree that baptism is for believers we don't need to study that. So the issue to study is, should the children of believers also be baptised. Work through this study to discover the biblical reasons for why some reformed evangelicals happily practice infant baptism.

Thinking Covenant promises.

1. Skim read Genesis 17. Did God's Old Covenant with Abraham include children? And at the initiation of 'circumcision' the Old Covenant sign, what age groups got circumcised?

2. Who did God rescue out of Egypt and save by bringing them through the Red Sea? Was it comprehending adults only, who left their children in Egyptian slavery and passed through the Red Sea, or did the children also pass through the sea and live under God's protecting cloud?

- What word does Paul use to describe and talk about this Old Covenant Israelite experience in 2 Corinthians 10:1-2?

3. Did the Old Covenant promises defiantly included children both in the sign of circumcision and in the salvation from Egypt?
 - Jeremiah 31: 31ff speaks of a time when the Lord would make a New Covenant with his people. Jesus at the last supper in Luke 22:20 explicitly says, 'this cup is the New Covenant in my blood' and in Matthew 4:17 we are told Jesus fulfilled the Law and the Prophets. What does 2 Corinthians 1:20 have to say to us and our children about all the Old Covenant promises?
4. What does Peter urge on those who were impacted by his preaching in Acts 2:38-39?
5. Describe who is getting baptized in Acts 10: 48 and in Acts 16:15 and in Acts 16:31-33?
 - Our western concept of 'a family' or a 'household' is Dad, Mum and the kids. Even with our limited definition we could assume the Apostles practice of baptising households included children. (For a bigger the biblical definition of a family unit read Joshua 7:14-24.)
6. On the basis of what you have studied so far do you there are legitimate biblical reasons for baptising children?
 - How could Mark 10:14 and 1 Corinthians 7: 14 strengthen the case for infant baptism?

Arguing over the water baptism sign and how to implement it appropriately however is very foolish. Jesus' rebuke to the Pharisees over ritual trivia in Matthew 23:23 should be a warning to us not to go down that path. And where differences of opinion are held on matters not pertaining to salvation then the grace of Romans 14 is the rule we must apply with our brothers and sisters. Instead of getting worked up about water we ought to be working at soaking people with the wonderful saving message of our Triune God. This is the true baptism work of the Great Commission Jesus calls us to in Matthew 28:19.

THINK AND APPLY

The fact that in the Great Commission Jesus specifically says his disciples are to do a Trinitarian baptism and yet not once in the New Testament do the Apostles ever follow through on this in relation to a water-baptism has caused me to equate Trinitarian baptism with gospel preaching. The word 'baptise' in the Great Commission isn't about water at all. It is about soaking people in the saving message of God and those who respond positively are to be taught to **obey** Christ. The start of that life of obedience is the water-baptism sign into the name of Jesus Christ. Who can you intentionally aim to baptise is this way?

PRAYER

What can you pray about arising from this study?



**For next week
Read
1 Corinthians
11:17-34**