

# Baptism

## What is baptism?

Baptism is a Christian ordinance. That means that it is something we do that has been commanded by the Lord Jesus. He instructed that when a person has been saved or converted they should be baptised. After his resurrection the Lord Jesus said to his disciples: *“Go into all the world and preach the gospel to every creature. He who believes and is baptized will be saved; but he who does not believe will be condemned.”* Mark 16:15-16

Being baptised does not make a person a Christian. Rather it is a person's witness to what God has done in their heart.

Becoming a Christian and baptism are quite different. Conversion is inward, baptism is outward. Baptism is an outward and physical act to illustrate an inward spiritual event.

Yet in the New Testament, conversion and baptism are inseparable. Whenever you read of conversions, you read of baptisms. It is true that baptism is not essential to salvation yet is clearly required by the Lord Jesus. Therefore, all Christians should seek baptism.

## What does baptism symbolise?

*It is a picture of obedience.* The call goes out "repent and be baptised". We obey the call to repent in the secrecy of our hearts and then we obey the call to be baptised in the openness of a church service.

*It is a picture of forgiveness.* The water symbolises our washing away of sin. As a converted Christian passes through the waters of baptism, they are effectively saying: "I have been entirely washed by the blood of Jesus Christ" (1 Corinthians 6:3-4).

*It is a symbol of a new life.* It symbolises the radical change that takes place when a person is converted (Romans 6:3-4).

## Baptism means immersion.

Lausanne Free Church normally baptises by total immersion because we believe that is what the Scriptures teach. The Greek word "baptizo" means to immerse, dip or engulf.

In his famous book *Baptizein* Professor Conant located every single usage of the baptism words in Greek literature. He found not one single instance that deviates from the “dip-whelm-immersed-plunge” meaning.

The scriptures give strong evidence that John the Baptist and the disciples practiced baptism by full immersion.

John the Baptist used the River Jordan. Mark 1:5 *Then all the land of Judea, and those from Jerusalem, went out to him and were all baptized by him in the Jordan River, confessing their sins.* Why did he need a river if baptism was by sprinkling?

John the Baptist used a place where there was much water. John 3:23 *Now John also was baptizing in Aenon near Salim, because there was much water there. And they came and were baptized.*

Why did John need a lot of water if he was baptising by sprinkling? A cup would be enough for dozens of people.

When the Lord Jesus was baptised, we read he came up from or out of the water. Mark 1:9 *It came to pass in those days that Jesus came from Nazareth of Galilee and was baptized by John in the Jordan. And immediately, coming up from the water, He saw the heavens parting and the Spirit descending upon Him like a dove.*

If The Lord Jesus was only sprinkled, why did he come out from the water?

The Ethiopian Eunuch wanted to be baptised. What happened? Acts 8:36-39 *Now as they went down the road, they came to some water. And the eunuch said, "See, here is water. What hinders me from being baptized?" Then Philip said, "If you believe with all your heart, you may." And he answered and said, "I believe that Jesus Christ is the Son of God." So he commanded the chariot to stand still. And both Philip and the eunuch went down into the water, and he baptized him. 39 Now when they came up out of the water, the Spirit of the Lord caught Philip away, so that the eunuch saw him no more; and he went on his way rejoicing.*

If baptism was by sprinkling surely he could have been baptised in his chariot using his flask of water. But this is not what happened.

### **Believer's baptism**

At Lausanne Free Church we practice believers' baptism. Only children or adults who have made a credible profession of faith in the Lord Jesus are baptised. We give seven reasons for this based on texts in the Scriptures:

#### **1) In the New Testament, right from beginning, the only baptism described is believer's baptism.**

Mark 1:5. *Then all the land of Judea, and those from Jerusalem, went out to him and were all baptized by him in the Jordan River, confessing their sins.*

Acts 8:12 *But when they believed Philip as he preached the things concerning the kingdom of God and the name of Jesus Christ, both men and women were baptized.*

#### **2) The Lord Jesus makes it clear that baptism follows conversion:**

In Matthew 28:19 Jesus said: *Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptising them.*

Becoming a disciple precedes baptism.

**3) Paul teaches that all those baptised have been called by God.**

*Ephesians 4:4-6 There is one body and one Spirit, just as you were called in one hope of your calling; one Lord, one faith, one baptism; one God and Father of all, who is above all, and through all, and in you all.*

**4) Paul assumes that those to be baptised have called on the Lord.**

*Acts 22:16 And now why are you waiting? Arise and be baptized, and wash away your sins, calling on the name of the Lord.'*

Paul did not say to the crowd, "Arise you and your family and be baptised."

**5) Paul believed that every person baptised had exercised faith in Christ and put on Christ.**

*Galatians 3:26-27 For you are all sons of God through faith in Christ Jesus. For as many of you as were baptized into Christ have put on Christ.*

**6) Paul teaches that those baptised have union with Christ in his death and resurrection.**

*Romans 6:3-4 Or do you not know that as many of us as were baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into His death? Therefore, we were buried with Him through baptism into death, that just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life.*

**7) Paul assumes that all those baptised have been born again.**

*1 Corinthians 12:13 For by one Spirit we were all baptized into one body—whether Jews or Greeks, whether slaves or free—and have all been made to drink into one Spirit.*

## **Paedobaptism**

Many sincere Bible believing Christians believe that the infants and children of a believing parent can also be baptised. This is called paedobaptism.

The rest of this article looks at the Biblical arguments used to support infant baptism and responses.

It is divided into 4 sections:

- a) The dividing point between credo Baptists and paedobaptists.
- b) The paedobaptist argument with responses.
- c) Six further difficulties with the paedobaptist position.
- d) Conclusion

## **A) The dividing point between credo Baptists and paedobaptists**

The debate between paedobaptists and credo Baptists is whether with the coming of the New Covenant God changed who could receive the sign that they were a member of God's people.

All agree that circumcision was a sign that a person was a member of the Jewish people. Circumcision was first given as a sign of the covenant God graciously made with Abraham. All the male descendants of Abraham were to be circumcised as a sign of that covenant. (Genesis 17:1-27).

Circumcision was also used as a sign of the Mosaic covenant. Under the Mosaic law it was given to infant boys when they were eight days old (Leviticus 12:3). Older males who converted to Judaism were circumcised as well.

All Christians accept that under the New Covenant circumcision was done away as a sign because it was part of the Old Covenant.

All Christians accept that under the New Covenant baptism is a sign and seal that a person is a member of the covenant of grace.

The dividing point is over who can be baptised.

Credo Baptists believe only those who make a personal and credible confession of faith in the Lord Jesus Christ should be baptised. This is not limited to adults but can include children who are old enough to confess Christ as their Lord and Saviour.

Paedobaptists believe that the infant child of a parent who professes faith in Christ can also be baptised even if they are too young to confess Christ for themselves. So, if a parent is saved any children can and should be baptised as well, and any new baby born to that believing parent can also be baptised.

To put it another way, if we think of the great confessions of faith, the confessions all agree on the following, the only disagreement is at the end:

- 1) There is a covenant of grace.
- 2) This is founded on God's eternal counsel of redemption.
- 3) The covenant of grace is first unveiled in Genesis 3:15
- 4) The covenant of grace is the same in every generation and is the only way to be saved.
- 5) The covenant of grace is particular.
- 6) The participators are Christ and his elect.
- 7) There is an organic – its participators connect from generation to generation:
  - a. The 1640 Westminster Confession of Faith affirms that this connection is physical.
  - b. The 1689 Baptist Confession of Faith affirms that this connection is spiritual.

## **B) The paedobaptist argument with responses**

The paedobaptist position is drawn from *A New Systematic Theology of the Christian Faith* by Dr Robert Reymond and William Hendriksen's New Testament commentaries.

### **A summary of the Paedobaptist argument:**

- Infant males received the sign and seal of the covenant of grace under the Old Testament covenant.
- The covenant of grace is continuous - the people of God are one.
- The sign of the covenant changed between the Old and New Testament from circumcision to baptism.
- Although the sign changed, there was no repeal of who is entitled to receive that sign.
- All the children of parents who are in the covenant of grace can receive the sign of the covenant of grace. Infant children of believing parents can and should be baptised.

Three main arguments are used.

### **1) Paedobaptist Argument 1: There is one covenant of grace administered differently in Old Testament and New Testament.**

Paedobaptists argue that there is one covenant of grace in the Old and New Testament. The covenant of grace was administered differently in the time of the law and in the time of the gospel. The Abrahamic and Mosaic covenant are administrations of the covenant of grace.

The sign that an infant is under the covenant in the Old Testament was circumcision and the sign that a person is under the covenant in the New Testament is baptism. Circumcision was therefore replaced by baptism.

The paedobaptist position is one arrived at by looking at the relationship between the Old and New Testament and especially the covenants.

Under the dispensation that began with Abraham, the sign and seal of the covenant of grace was circumcision (Gen 17:1-27). The ground for applying the sign of the covenant was simply God's command. The sign of circumcision said nothing about the spiritual state of the person being circumcised. In the same way paedobaptists argue that infants receive the sign of the covenant of baptism. This has nothing to do with their spiritual state before God.

Paedobaptists believe the Old Testament practise of reckoning children among the covenant people of God and having this covenant sign administered them in infancy is nowhere taken away in the New Testament.

### **Refutation of the one covenant of grace argument.**

- 1) Circumcision was introduced around 2,000 years after the covenant of grace was first revealed.

The covenant of grace was revealed first to Adam and Eve, but there was no stipulation to be circumcised. The covenant given to Abraham is an example of a covenant of grace, but by that time many had already been saved without any sign of circumcision – Adam, Eve, Enoch, Noah, Job. The sign was given to Abraham and his descendants.

Even after the sign of circumcision was given we have examples of Gentiles who were saved who were not circumcised (such as the people of Nineveh). Why was that? Because they were saved by the covenant of grace.

2) The sign of circumcision was only for the physical descendants of Abraham.

The covenant that God made with Abraham when circumcision was introduced (Genesis 17) was a gracious covenant. God promised unilaterally to make his descendants a great nation. This Covenant was made after Abraham was called out of Ur (Genesis 12) and was saved.

The sign of circumcision was a sign not that all his descendants would be saved but rather that they would be a great people blessed by God. It was a sign that the Jewish people had been given the Promised Land and would be a great nation (Genesis 15:6-14).

Circumcision reminded Jews of their special privileges in having the Word of God, special protection, and other benefits. Chiefly, it reminded people about Abraham, and how he trusted God for salvation (Romans 4). It was a preaching sign pointing to Abraham's faith (not theirs). Circumcision did not signify that a person was saved simply by being born a Jew. It never was as a sign of being one of God's ransomed, born-again people.

Any Jewish person who has a son is commanded to have his son circumcised. There is no requirement for the father to be following the faith (Genesis 15:13).

3) The Mosaic covenant is not a covenant of grace. It is a covenant of works with gracious elements.

Hebrews 10:11 tells us that the Mosaic covenant priests and sacrifices could never take away sin. We see this in the Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers and Deuteronomy. The sacrificial system was in place, but what was to happen when people deliberately sinned?

Look at Leviticus chapter 20:

- Verse 9 Those who curse his father or mother shall be put to death
- Verse 10: Those who commit adultery shall be put to death
- Verse 27: Those who consult a medium shall be put to death

Look in Numbers 15 verses 32-36. What should happen to someone who breaks the sabbath? Offer a sacrifice? No... *'be put to death'*.

The only sin that was covered was unintentional sin (Numbers 15:22-29).

All this is summarised at the end of Deuteronomy with the blessings and cursing announced on two mountains – see Deuteronomy 27 and 28.

The purpose of the Mosaic covenant was to make people realise that they could not be saved by works and point them to Christ (Galatians 3:19-25).

4) The Scriptures teach two parallel covenants – one of works and one of grace.

Deuteronomy is a sermon Moses preached just before the children of Israel entered the Promised Land. Moses reminds the people of the terms of the Mosaic covenant given at Sinai. At the end there are the curses for disobedience in chapters 27 and 28. The clear message is – this is a covenant of works. “Do this and live, don’t do this and die”.

But then in Deuteronomy God gives a separate second covenant, a covenant of grace in chapters 29 and 30.

Deuteronomy 29:1. *‘These are the words of the covenant which the Lord commanded Moses to make with the children of Israel in the land of Moab, besides the covenant which He made with them in Horeb.’*

This covenant is evangelistic. It offers forgiveness to those who repent. No mention is made of the need to offer sacrifices. At heart it is “believe this and live”.

Deuteronomy 30:1-6 *‘Now it shall come to pass, when all these things come upon you, the blessing and the curse which I have set before you, and you call them to mind among all the nations where the Lord your God drives you, and you return to the Lord your God and obey His voice, according to all that I command you today, you and your children, with all your heart and with all your soul, that the Lord your God will bring you back from captivity, and have compassion on you, and gather you again from all the nations where the Lord your God has scattered you. If any of you are driven out to the farthest parts under heaven, from there the Lord your God will gather you, and from there He will bring you.*

*Then the Lord your God will bring you to the land which your fathers possessed, and you shall possess it. He will prosper you and multiply you more than your fathers. And the Lord your God will circumcise your heart and the heart of your descendants, to love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul, that you may live.’*

All through the Old Testament history we see people repenting and being forgiven such as David when he sinned. What did he do? See Psalm 51. He did not offer a sacrifice. He did not rely on the Mosaic covenant of works but on the Moab covenant of grace.

In the New Testament Paul compares and contrasts the two covenants in Romans 10:5-11. First he quotes from the Mount Sinai covenant (a covenant of works), second from the Moab covenant (a covenant of grace):

*For Moses writes about the righteousness which is of the law, “The man who does those things shall live by them.”*

*But the righteousness of faith speaks in this way, “Do not say in your heart, ‘Who will ascend into heaven?’ ” (that is, to bring Christ down from above) or, “ ‘Who will descend into the abyss?’ ” (that is, to bring Christ up from the dead). But what does it say? “The word is near you, in your mouth and in your heart” (that is, the word of faith which we preach): that if you confess with your mouth the Lord Jesus and believe in*

*your heart that God has raised Him from the dead, you will be saved. For with the heart one believes unto righteousness, and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation. For the Scripture says, "Whoever believes on Him will not be put to shame." For there is no distinction between Jew and Greek, for the same Lord over all is rich to all who call upon Him. For "whoever calls on the name of the Lord shall be saved."*

In Hebrews 8 the writer confirms there are two covenants, one of works (the Mosaic Covenant) and one of grace (the New Covenant).

*Hebrews 8:1-13: Now this is the main point of the things we are saying: We have such a High Priest, who is seated at the right hand of the throne of the Majesty in the heavens, a Minister of the sanctuary and of the true tabernacle which the Lord erected, and not man. For every high priest is appointed to offer both gifts and sacrifices. Therefore it is necessary that this One also have something to offer. For if He were on earth, He would not be a priest, since there are priests who offer the gifts according to the law; who serve the copy and shadow of the heavenly things, as Moses was divinely instructed when he was about to make the tabernacle. For He said, "See that you make all things according to the pattern shown you on the mountain." But now He has obtained a more excellent ministry, inasmuch as He is also Mediator of a better covenant, which was established on better promises.*

*For if that first covenant had been faultless, then no place would have been sought for a second. Because finding fault with them, He says: "Behold, the days are coming, says the Lord, when I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel and with the house of Judah— not according to the covenant that I made with their fathers in the day when I took them by the hand to lead them out of the land of Egypt; because they did not continue in My covenant, and I disregarded them, says the Lord. For this is the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel after those days, says the Lord: I will put My laws in their mind and write them on their hearts; and I will be their God, and they shall be My people. None of them shall teach his neighbour, and none his brother, saying, 'Know the Lord,' for all shall know Me, from the least of them to the greatest of them. For I will be merciful to their unrighteousness, and their sins and their lawless deeds I will remember no more."*

*In that He says, "A new covenant," He has made the first obsolete. Now what is becoming obsolete and growing old is ready to vanish away.*

For a full exposition of this passage, it is worth reading the great theologian John Owen. He was a paedobaptist, but his careful analysis of the text proves without doubt the two parallel covenants position.

What are we to conclude? The Mosaic law was not an administration of the covenant of grace. It was a covenant of works (with gracious elements). The New covenant is a covenant of grace. Circumcision under the Mosaic covenant was a sign under a covenant of works. Baptism is a sign under a covenant of grace.

## **2) Paedobaptist argument 2: Various New Testament support infant baptism.**

Nine New Testament texts are often used by paedobaptists in support of their view. We look at them in the order they appear in the New Testament.



## Luke 18:15

**The paedobaptist argument:** In this passage the Lord Jesus says, *‘let the little children come to me for such is the Kingdom of heaven’*. The argument is that Jesus in effect saying that the Kingdom of heaven belongs to children who have covenant parents.

Jesus then blessed the children. Probably some were too young to understand what was going on but that did not nullify the blessing. Jesus is expressly telling us that children of covenant parents are part of the covenant.

**Response:** There is no reference to the covenant in this passage. How do we know if all the children that were brought were Jewish? And supposing children of gentiles have been brought would Jesus have refused to bless them?

## Acts 2:39

Acts 2:38-39 *Then Peter said to them, “Repent, and let every one of you be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins; and you shall receive the gift of the Holy Spirit. 39 For the promise is to you and to your children, and to all who are afar off, as many as the Lord our God will call.”*

**The paedobaptist argument:** On the day Pentecost Peter clearly says that the promise of the coming Holy Spirit is for you (that is those who are listening) and their children (who paedobaptists assume were not listening or could not understand). The phrase *‘the promise is for you and your children’* is an echo of the promise that God gave to Abraham that the blessings would be for him and his descendants.

This is interpreted by paedobaptists that not only were the listeners who believed baptised but also their infant children who were too young to believe.

**Response:** What is the promise Peter makes? Those who repent and are baptised will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit (be born again). Who is the promise to? Anyone who responds in this way: The listeners, their children, in fact anyone. Anyone who repents and is baptised will receive the Holy Spirit. Notice the order – repent and be baptised.

What then happened? Who was baptised? Acts 2:40-41 *And with many other words he testified and exhorted them, saying, “Be saved from this perverse generation.” Then those who gladly received his word were baptized; and that day about three thousand souls were added to them.*

Those who gladly received the word...those who understood repented and believed, they and only they were baptised. There is no mention of babies being baptised.

## Acts 10 Baptism of Cornelius’ household.

**Paedobaptist argument:** This is the first of three “household” texts that support infant baptism. We read that Cornelius and all his household were baptised after he believed.

**Response:** The Greek word translated *household* in these texts simply means *dwelling* or *house*. It occurs 114 times in the New Testament and is nearly always translated *house* as in *house of prayer, house of Israel*.

You would use this word to describe a household that consists of any of the following: a single adult, a married couple, a couple with children, a widow with children or a widow on her own, parents with adult children, or a whole nation! Therefore, the use of the word *household* does not prove that infant children are in that house.

Let us now look at what happened in Acts 10 with Cornelius and his household.

Acts 10:1-2 *‘There was a certain man in Caesarea called Cornelius, a centurion of what was called the Italian Regiment, a devout man and one who feared God with all his household, who gave alms generously to the people, and prayed to God always.’*

There is no specific mention of children let alone babies. Instead, just his *household*. Even if there were children, we are told that everyone in that household was old enough to "*fear the Lord*".

Acts 10:7 *‘And when the angel who spoke to him had departed, Cornelius called two of his household servants and a devout soldier from among those who waited on him continually.’*

After the angel departs who does he call for? No mention of his wife or children. Instead, he calls for two servants of his household and a close friend.

Verse 24 *And the following day they entered Caesarea. Now Cornelius was waiting for them and had called together his relatives and close friends.*

Again, no mention of children. Relatives could include children, but they are obviously old enough to be *called together*. The strong implication is that the relatives did not live with him as they had to be called like his friends to the house.

Verse 33 *So I sent to you immediately, and you have done well to come. Now therefore, we are all present before God, to hear all the things commanded you by God.”*

The message is that everyone present was old enough to hear and understand.

Verse 44 *While Peter was still speaking these words, the Holy Spirit fell upon all those who heard the word. And those of the circumcision who believed were astonished, as many as came with Peter, because the gift of the Holy Spirit had been poured out on the Gentiles also. For they heard them speak with tongues and magnify God.*

The Holy Spirit fell on all present who heard the word and all began to speak in tongues. This tells us 1) all present were at least old enough to be able to talk 2) All those present were old enough to hear understand and respond. 3) All were baptised in the Holy Spirit, therefore all were born again and saved, therefore all were baptised in water. Baptism followed conversion.

### **Acts 16:15 Baptism of Lydia's household.**

*And on the Sabbath day we went out of the city to the riverside, where prayer was customarily made; and we sat down and spoke to the women who met there. Now a certain woman named Lydia heard us. She was a seller of purple from the city of Thyatira, who worshiped God. The Lord opened her heart to heed the things spoken by Paul. And when she and her household were baptized, she begged us, saying, "If you have judged me to be faithful to the Lord, come to my house and stay."*

**Paedobaptist argument:** This passage is one of the household baptisms. Lydia believed, but we then read her whole household was baptised. Based on her becoming a member of the new covenant those in her household received the sign of the new covenant - baptism.

**Response:** There is no mention of children at all in this incident. In fact no husband is mentioned.

It is highly likely that Lydia was not married or a widow. We can deduce this from:

- She met with the women to worship by the riverside.
- She was head of her own household.
- The household is called *her* household,
- When she invited Paul to stay with her she says *my* house not *our* house.

Who were in her household who believed and were baptised? The text does not say. It could be her children if she was a widow, but we don't know. As a dealer in purple cloth she was probably a wealthy woman so she probably had servants.

### **Acts 16 Baptism of the Philippian Jailor's household.**

*Acts 16:29-34: Then he called for a light, ran in, and fell down trembling before Paul and Silas. And he brought them out and said, "Sirs, what must I do to be saved?" So they said, "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and you will be saved, you and your household." Then they spoke the word of the Lord to him and to all who were in his house. And he took them the same hour of the night and washed their stripes. And immediately he and all his (family) were baptized. Now when he had brought them into his house, he set food before them; and he rejoiced, having believed in God with all his household.'*

**Paedobaptist argument:** Something similar happened with the Philippian jailer as with Lydia. The emphasis in the passage is on him repenting and believing. Yet we then read that all his family were baptised.

**Response:** Paul spoke the word to whom? *The Jailer and all who were in his house* (verse 32). All gathered to hear the word preached.

Who believed? *The jailor and all his household* (verse 34). In other words, all who were listening were old enough to respond, by believing on the Lord Jesus.

Who was baptised? *The jailor and his family* (verse 33). In fact the word *family* is not in the original. It simply says and all *his*. In other words all his household.

When Paul said that if the jailor believes he will be saved he and his household it cannot mean that based on the jailor's confession other people are immediately born again and saved for all eternity. This is not the paedobaptists' view. Instead, he simply means that all who believe will be saved.

The key verse (that is often overlooked) is Act 16: 34 *Now when he had brought them into his house, he set food before them; and he rejoiced, having believed in God with all his household.* Everyone who was baptised by Paul had first believed on the Lord Jesus. As we read that all his household believed, we can assume reasonably that there were no infants who were too young to believe.

The same applies to 1 Corinthians 1:16 – the household of Stephanus. It appears that Stephanas was married (see 1 Corinthians 16:15) but again there is no mention of infant children. It is unwise to base an argument on silence!

#### Conclusion concerning household texts.

There is no mention of infant children in any of the three household passages. In fact there is no mention of a wife or husband or any children. It is quite possible all three were unmarried.

There is strong support that all those who were baptised had personally repented and believed. It is possible that this included children, but if it did, they were old enough to repent and believe.

#### **1 Corinthians 7:14**

*For the unbelieving husband is sanctified by the wife, and the unbelieving wife is sanctified by the husband; otherwise your children would be unclean, but now they are holy.*

**Paedobaptist argument:** In this passage Paul is talking about where there is one believing spouse in a marriage. Paul's concern is to show that mixed marriages (i.e., between a believer and unbeliever) are holy. He proves the sanctifying effect of the believing spouse on the marriage relationship by talking about the sanctifying effect upon the children. The children are holy and therefore the marriage cannot be unholy.

Now of course Paul is not saying that the children are saved because of the parent's belief. So what is he saying? Paul is doubtless intended to give covenant status to the children in a family where at least one of the parents was a member of the Church of Christ.

**Response:** On this basis the unbelieving adult – husband or wife - can also be baptised!

The context of the passage is marriage and divorce, not the covenant and not baptism. Paul is simply saying that if a believer is married to a non-believer he or she can and should stay married because the marriage is valid in the eyes of God.

## **Ephesians 6:1-2**

*Children, obey your parents in the Lord, for this is right. 2 “Honor your father and mother,” which is the first commandment with promise: 3 “that it may be well with you and you may live long on the earth.”*

**Paedobaptist argument:** The letter to the Ephesians is written to the saints who are in Ephesus. Part of the letter addressed to the saints is addressed to children. See Ephesians 6. Paul is therefore implying the children have a covenant status. If they have a covenant status they can receive to sign the covenant.

**Response:** The children involved are old enough to hear the words of Ephesians 6 and understand them. Therefore, they are old enough to repent and believe. In any case the command to obey parents is a command that applies to all children whether believers or not.

**1 Corinthians 10:1-2 and 1 Peter 3** – Old Testament types (pictures/symbols) of Christian baptism.

**Paedobaptist argument:** The New Testament speaks of the Genesis flood and the exodus from Egypt as types (pictures/symbols) of Christian baptism. In 1 Corinthians 10 Paul declares that all Israel was baptised into Moses in the cloud and the sea. In 1 Peter, he notes that Noah and his sons along with their wives were baptised by the waters of the flood.

In both cases and elect people were delivered from death and in both the covenant is made not only with individuals, but also with their family and their children. There is no doubt that in the case of the exodus from Egypt this would have included many infants.

**Response:** In 1 Corinthians 10 the central message is the danger of falling away having believed and followed Christ (verse 12). The exodus is used as an example. The “all” were those who were old enough to believe - they drank the spiritual food and followed the rock that is Christ. We read in verse 5 that most fell away. Who fell away and died in the wilderness? Those aged 20 and over - not babies and children!

*1 Peter 3: 21- 22 There is also an antitype which now saves us—baptism (not the removal of the filth of the flesh, but the answer of a good conscience toward God), through the resurrection of Jesus Christ, who has gone into heaven and is at the right hand of God, angels and authorities and powers having been made subject to Him.*

In 1 Peter 3 only 8 were saved. All 8 were adults, there were no children. All had to believe for themselves, and all had to enter the ark for themselves. All therefore were believers.

## **Colossians 2:9-13**

*Colossians 2:11-14 In Him you were also circumcised with the circumcision made without hands, by putting off the body of the sins of the flesh, by the circumcision of Christ, buried with Him in baptism, in which you also were raised with Him through faith in the working of God, who raised Him from the dead. And you, being dead in your trespasses and the uncircumcision of your flesh, He has made alive together with Him, having forgiven you all trespasses, having wiped out the handwriting of requirements that was against us, which was contrary to us.*

**Paedobaptist argument:** Paul expressly connects circumcision and baptism in Colossians 2:9-13. What is said in reference to circumcision being a sign and seal also holds for baptism.

The definite implication the paedobaptist argues therefore is that baptism has taken the place of circumcision. Since baptism has come in the place of circumcision, the children should be baptised as heirs of the Kingdom of God and of his covenant.

**Response:** First it is worth emphasising that in this passage Paul assumes that all who have been baptised have been saved.

- They have been buried with Christ and raised with him **through faith**. In other words all those baptised have believed!
- They have been **made alive**. In other words, born again.
- Have had all their sins **forgiven**. In other words are saved.

Paul is saying that circumcision and baptism are not equivalent. He is saying that physical circumcision did not symbolise salvation, but Christians have received true circumcision (deliverance from the power and dominion of sin). This true circumcision is symbolised by baptism. Baptism symbolises something far better than physical circumcision namely salvation.

Circumcision reminded the Jews of their special privileges Especially about Abraham how he trusted in God. (See Romans 4).

Circumcision did not signify that they were saved simply by being bought Jews. It was never a sign of being born again. However baptism is such a sign and therefore it is different from circumcision.

Circumcision was a preaching sign pointing to Abraham's faith (not theirs), baptism is a sign that points to our faith.

### **3) Paedobaptist argument 3: There is no direct command not to baptise infants.**

Paedobaptists accept there is no direct command in the Bible to baptise babies. However, paedobaptists argue there is also no direct command not to baptise infants.

**Response.** On this basis infants should also be offered communion as there is no direct command saying that infants should not receive communion. For paedobaptists, are not infants part of the church (1 Corinthians 11:18)? So why not offer them communion? In any case all the commands to be baptise are for those who have repented and believed.

### **C) Six further difficulties with paedobaptist position.**

- 1) Circumcision is not the same as baptism.
  - Circumcision was for males only and was meant to be undertaken when a child was an infant (unless he was a foreigner who wanted to join the Jewish people – Exodus 12:43-49).
  - Baptism is for male and female and is not limited to infants.
  - Therefore only 50% of children were circumcised. However 100% of believers can be baptised.
- 2) Under the Old Testament, promises were to the Jews to their sons and their grandsons and every generation. Yet paedobaptists will only baptise children of believers, not the grandchildren or the great grandchildren of believers.
- 3) Not all those saved prior to start of the Gospel age were commanded to be circumcised but all saved in the Gospel age are commanded to be baptised.
  - There was no command for believers from Adam to Abraham to be circumcised.
  - Circumcision was only for the male descendants of Abraham and adult males who wished to join the Jewish people.
    - Even after circumcision was given, we have many examples of Gentile people saved who were not commanded to be circumcised. For instance, the people of Nineveh, Naaman and Nebuchadnezzar.
  - All who believe in the Gospel age are commanded to be baptised. (Matthew 28:28-31)
- 4) There are many verses in the Old Testament that describe the circumcision of infants. There are no passages in the New Testament that describe the baptism of infants.
- 5) There are no passages that even hint of a new-born baby of believing parents being baptised even though the New Testament covers a period of over 60 years.
- 6) Circumcision was for any boy born a descendant from Abraham. It did not matter if the parents were not believers. Baptism is only for believers.

Even paedobaptists recognise that at least one parent has to be a believer for a child to be baptised.

- 7) Paedobaptists have had to invent an extra ritual called confirmation when a person baptised as a baby confirms they are a believer. After this point they can take communion. There is no mention of such a ritual in the New Testament even though the New Testament covers a period of over 60 years.

## D) Conclusion

There are many verses that teach baptism follows repentance and faith. There are no verses that support baptism followed by repentance.

There are many examples of baptism but none of them clearly show a baby being baptised based on the faith of their parents.

We end where we began with the clear instruction of the Lord Jesus Christ. *“Go into all the world and preach the gospel to every creature. He who believes and is baptized will be saved; but he who does not believe will be condemned.”*

The Gospel message we must proclaim to all inside the church and outside the church is clear – repent and believe and be baptised.

To God be the glory!

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