

“Should Babies Be Baptized?”

Baptism is an important subject in the New Testament. It is not a church-created ritual or ordinance, it's not a human tradition, and it is not a work of man's righteousness. It is a commandment of the Lord Jesus Christ.

Matthew 28:18-20 “And Jesus came and spake unto them, saying, All power is given unto me in heaven and in earth. Go ye therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost: Teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you: and, lo, I am with you alway, even unto the end of the world. Amen.”

When Jesus commissioned His apostles to go forth and preach the gospel, He said to *make disciples in every nation*. Mark's account says for them to *go and preach the gospel to every creature*. Then He says to *baptize them*, then to *teach them* to observe all of His commandments. The very first time the gospel was preached by the apostles and the church was established, we read that three thousand people in one day were baptized for the remission of their sins. The scriptures show that a number of spiritual blessings are received when one, like them, submits to Christ in baptism.

So, that brings up the question: Who should be baptized? There are churches who claim to baptize babies. They practice sprinkling for baptism, and parents choose to have their child christened or dedicated, and some even believe that babies **MUST** be baptized because of what they claim is 'inherited Adamic sin.' But what saith the scriptures?

Paul and Silas were in jail and an earthquake came during the midnight hour, causing the jail doors to open and the jailer who was charged with keeping them was afraid that they had all escaped. That jailer was about to take his own life when Paul stopped him and assured him that all of the prisoners were still there. This jailer was amazed and his heart was softened. Let's pick up the reading there.

Acts 16:29-34 “Then he called for a light, and sprang in, and came trembling, and fell down before Paul and Silas, And brought them out, and said, Sirs, what must I do to be saved? And they said, Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved, and thy house. And they spake unto him the word of the Lord, and to all that were in his house. And he took them the same hour of the night, and washed their stripes; and was baptized, he and all his, straightway. And when he had brought them into his house, he set meat before them, and rejoiced, believing in God with all his house.”

Who was Luke talking about when he said that all of the jailer's house were baptized? The text doesn't tell us, so to discern the truth, we'll have to see what else the scriptures teach about baptism's purpose and design. What is baptism? Why are people commanded to be baptized? What conditions do they have to meet to qualify as candidates for baptism? All of these are questions that are essential to answer in order to settle the issue at hand: Should babies be baptized?

First, let's look at the scriptural mode of baptism. What did it mean to be baptized in apostolic times? How were people baptized? There are many words that have crept into ecclesiastical usage today that didn't originate with the Bible. Some of these words describe a practice or concept that some believe

might be taught in some way in the scriptures, but the word itself originated with man. Baptism is NOT such a word. It is a Bible word, so we can look to the Bible and see how the word was used. We can turn to the sources we believe to be credible to help us define these words as they were used in that time, in the original language.

The Greek word *baptize* was used some eighty times in the New Testament. It is a form of the word *bapto*, and that root word means *to dip*. W.E. Vine says that the Greeks used the word in that day to refer to *dying a garment or drawing water by dipping one vessel into another*. There is also a related word, *baptisma*, which means *the process of immersion, submersion or immergence*, Vine says. The English transliteration of the word *baptisma* is *baptism*.

For example, when we read of John's baptism, or *baptisma*, it is talking about John *immersing* people in water. That makes sense because we also read of people going down to the Jordan River to be baptized at the hands of John. If baptism consisted of sprinkling, why the Jordan River? Sprinkling or pouring could've been accomplished anywhere that a small container of water could be found or carried. Water could've been drawn out of a well even. But, no, it is rather obvious that John was immersing people in water. There was much water in the Jordan.

That is in line with what the book of Acts says about baptism. In the 8th chapter, we read of the conversion of the nobleman from Ethiopia. The Bible says that when Philip preached Jesus to him, they were passing a body of water, and the eunuch desired to be baptized.

Acts 8:38-39 "And he commanded the chariot to stand still: and they went down both into the water, both Philip and the eunuch; and he baptized him. And when they were come up out of the water, the Spirit of the Lord caught away Philip, that the eunuch saw him no more: and he went on his way rejoicing."

Here, the word *baptized* is the transliteration of the Greek word *baptize*, which also comes from the word *bapto*. It means *to dip, submerge or plunge*. We just read that the eunuch's baptism involved going *down into the water and coming up out of the water*. That's how the Bible says people were baptized.

Unfortunately though, tradition can change how we use certain words. When the King James translators set out to translate the Bible into English, some words that were not allowed to be translated but were instead transliterated are the words *baptisma* and *baptizo*. They were transliterated as *baptism* and *baptize* instead of their English equivalents *immersion and immerse*. Why would they do that? Well, tradition had already taken hold. King James was an Anglican, and the Anglican church, like the Catholic church, practiced sprinkling, calling it *baptism*. By this time, this tradition trumped apostolic practice.

Sprinkling did not officially begin until the year 1311, almost 1300 years after the gospel was first preached and the Lord's church was established. There were isolated incidences of sprinkling a couple hundred years after Pentecost, recorded by Eusebius. For example, when people were on their deathbeds, clinical baptism as it was called, was performed and they would have water poured on or around them. Again, that's according to history a few hundred years after the establishment of the church. It was not an apostolic practice. Sprinkling did not gain official acceptance in the Catholic church until the year 1311.

The apostolic practice commissioned by Christ was to *immerse*, and how could it have been any other way?

Colossians 2:12 “Buried with him in baptism, wherein also ye are risen with him through the faith of the operation of God, who hath raised him from the dead.”

Romans 6:3-5 “Know ye not, that so many of us as were baptized into Jesus Christ were baptized into his death? Therefore we are buried with him by baptism into death: that like as Christ was raised up from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life. For if we have been planted together in the likeness of his death, we shall be also in the likeness of his resurrection:”

If you’re going to *baptize* a baby, you would have to *immerse* that baby, according to scripture. To follow the Biblical mode or method of *baptism*, that’s what you’d have to do.

Then there are the prerequisites of baptism. What is necessary before a person can be scripturally baptized? Take another look at our text:

Matthew 28:18-20 “And Jesus came and spake unto them, saying, All power is given unto me in heaven and in earth. Go ye therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost: Teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you: and, lo, I am with you alway, even unto the end of the world. Amen.”

Who were they to baptize? Those whom they had taught and made disciples. *Teach* and then, *baptize*.

Mark 16:16 “He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved; but he that believeth not shall be damned.”

Who should be baptized? One who has been *taught*, and has *believed* what he has been taught. Some will say, *If baptism is necessary to salvation, why wouldn’t Jesus have said ‘He that believeth not and is not baptized will be condemned.’? He didn’t say anything about baptism in the negative portion of the passage.* The reason is, baptism is predicated upon belief. Baptism does an unbeliever no good. If a person can’t or doesn’t believe, baptism is not for him, so why would Jesus need to say, ‘He that believeth not and is not baptized shall be condemned.’? Baptism is the response of belief.

Who should be baptized? One who has been *taught* and who has *believed* what he was taught.

Acts 2:38 “Then Peter said unto them, Repent, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins, and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Ghost.”

Who should be baptized? All who will *repent* and who wanted to receive the gift of the Holy Spirit.

Look again at the baptism of the Ethiopian nobleman in **Acts 8**.

Acts 8:35-38 “Then Philip opened his mouth, and began at the same scripture, and preached unto him Jesus. And as they went on their way, they came unto a certain water: and the eunuch said, See, here is water; what doth hinder me to be baptized? And Philip said, If thou believest with all thine heart, thou mayest. And he answered and said, I believe that Jesus

Christ is the Son of God. And he commanded the chariot to stand still: and they went down both into the water, both Philip and the eunuch; and he baptized him.”

So, first, he *taught* him. He *desired* to be baptized. He was told he could be baptized IF he *believed*. He then *confessed* with his mouth his belief in the Lord Jesus, and he was taken down into the water and was *baptized*. Can an infant do any of that? Infant baptism is wrong, because babies don't meet the prerequisites for baptism. Friend, it is a human tradition; not an apostolic practice.

Some will argue that children can, and even should be baptized upon the faith of their parents. They liken it to the old covenant and circumcision. They say that since babies were circumcised under the Abrahamic covenant, parents today can likewise exercise their faith on behalf of their children and have them sprinkled that they might be part of a covenant and a church. They say that children are “passive participants” in the covenant by virtue of their parents having them christened. There is a big, big difference. The old covenant was a fleshly covenant, a national covenant. One was part of that covenant by virtue of his being a descendant of Abraham. So, he was born into that system, that covenant, thus he received the sign of circumcision on the eighth day of his life. But, that old covenant has passed away.

Hebrews 8:13 “In that he saith, A new covenant, he hath made the first old. Now that which decayeth and waxeth old is ready to vanish away.”

We are now living under a new covenant. We now receive the blessings promised to Abraham spiritually; not by being born a child of Abraham or a fleshly Jew. There is no advantage to being of a particular race. That's not how we receive the promises of Abraham; rather, as the result of the new or second birth that Jesus talked about in **John 3**. Paul shows us that we Gentiles are now heirs to the promise that was made to Abraham when we submit in faith to the gospel. It comes through faith.

Galatians 3:26-27,29 “For ye are all the children of God by faith in Christ Jesus. For as many of you as have been baptized into Christ have put on Christ. And if ye be Christ's, then are ye Abraham's seed, and heirs according to the promise.”

I am baptized into Christ upon *MY* faith in Christ Jesus—not upon the faith of my parents. Babies don't meet the prerequisites for baptism, and the new covenant is not a fleshly, national covenant, as the first covenant was, to which circumcision pertained.

Then there is the purpose of baptism. The Bible plainly unequivocally states that baptism is for the remission or forgiveness of sins.

Acts 2:38 “Then Peter said unto them, Repent, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins...”

Saul was told this:

Acts 22:16 “And now why tarriest thou? arise, and be baptized, and wash away thy sins, calling on the name of the Lord.”

Why are believing, penitent sinners told to be baptized? We're not baptized merely as an 'outward sign' or to be 'dedicated to the Lord.' We are baptized, the Bible says, to receive the remission of our sins

through the blood of Jesus; to have our sins washed away. In order to receive the remission of sins and to *call on the name of the Lord*, we must be immersed.

Now, babies have not committed any sin. They're born into a world of sin and are subject to sin in this world, and they become sinners, like all men, when they in time violate the will of God, as all people do.

Romans 3:23 "For all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God;"

But a baby is not born with sins to his or her charge that must be remitted. The doctrine of 'original sin' or the idea that babies are born with Adamic, or original sin, was formulated by a man named St. Augusta. He was a member of the Catholic church who lived in the 4th and 5th centuries. His ideas concerning original sin and grace were the basis for the later teachings of the Protestant Reformation under men such as John Calvin. The practice of infant baptism in many churches today is very closely linked to this doctrine of Augusta. But, the New Testament simply does not teach such. In fact, Jesus bid the children to Him, saying this:

Mark 10:14 "...Suffer the little children to come unto me, and forbid them not: for of such is the kingdom of God."

Why would Jesus use them as such an example if they, like any person of accountable age, were vile, guilty, disgusting sinners? They have no sins to wash away, my friend. Therefore, infant baptism is not a Biblical doctrine.

Finally, what about all of the passages in the book of **Acts** that seem to speak of 'household baptisms?' The jailer and his house that we noted, in **Acts 16**; Cornelius' household was saved according to **Acts 11:14**; Lydia's household in **Acts 16:15**; Crispus and all of his house in **Acts 18:8**. Be very careful, because the text doesn't say any more than it says. Should we really surmise, make assumptions, draw conclusions from a text that would cause it to contradict what other passages plainly say about baptism?

The fact is, you don't know any more than I do about who made up the house of the jailer or the house of Cornelius. You might have someone who comes up with some very educated-sounding speculation, but the fact is, they don't know who made up those households. You might say, *it's very likely that they had small, even infant children*. But, that's speculation at best. There is not one single word in scripture that says that was the case, and even if there was, the word *house/household* would be qualified by the definition and design of baptism.

What if I were to say, like Joshua, "*As for me and my house, we will serve the Lord*" (**Joshua 24:15**). What if I have children who are not old enough to understand anything about the will and worship of God? What if I have an infant child born into my family, a six-month-old baby, incapable of choosing to serve the Lord? I can raise him so that he will serve the Lord one day, but at that point, he can't willfully and consciously serve the Lord. So, does that make Joshua's statement inapplicable? I would say no, because the phrase 'my house' refers to all within my house who are able to serve the Lord.

By the way, the word *house/household* in the case of families converted to Christ does not validate infant baptism.

Mark 16:15-16 "And he said unto them, Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature. He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved; but he that believeth not shall be damned."

Notice He says to “*preach the gospel to every creature.*” Does that mean that I am to preach the gospel to an infant? Should I go to the maternity ward and preach to the newborn babies at the hospital? It says *every creature*. We’d say that’s silly, they can’t hear and understand preaching. But are they living souls? Of course they are. Surely we can see that that phrase is limited to those who are capable of hearing and understanding the gospel. In the same way, one’s household being baptized would be limited to those who are able to willfully submit to such out of faith and upon repentance. Baptism is a command of the Lord for the believing, penitent sinner to have his/her sins forgiven and to enter into a new relationship with Christ Jesus, free from sin, becoming a servant of righteousness.

Have *YOU* chosen to be baptized for the remission of your sins, or were you sprinkled as a baby? I hope we can see that such is a manmade tradition of religion that was instituted centuries after Christ Jesus gave the command for baptism, and centuries after the apostles of Christ went throughout the world fulfilling the Great Commission. What you need to do is be immersed into Christ for the remission of your sins. That’s in your Bible, and it is in your Bible in black and white, plain as day. You need to do that, not because someone made that decision for you, but because *YOU* have been convicted of the sins that *YOU* have committed and *YOU* have come to have faith in Christ to save *YOU* from *YOUR* sins; because *YOU* have decided to repent and confess with *YOUR* mouth that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God. If you can be touched by the power of the gospel, if you’re willing to do that, we would be so happy to assist you in that. I am praying that you will do that today.