

Doctrine of Infant Baptism

Reformed Theology

1. Multitudes of Christians belong to denominations that practice infant baptism. Denominational families that practice infant baptism include:
 - Catholic
 - Eastern and Oriental Orthodox
 - Anglican
 - Lutheran
 - Presbyterian
 - Methodist
 - Nazarene
 - United Church of Christ
 - Moravian Church
 - Wesleyan
 - Episcopalian
 - Reformed churches
2. Reformed theology is very strong in defending Paedobaptism. However, it is not necessary to embrace Reformed theology, and infant baptism. The doctrine of grace can be embraced without Paedobaptism, reflected in the Reformed Baptist and the Methodist.
3. If believer's baptism is so clear, why have so many men of conscience rejected it? The answer is largely based on tradition.
4. Infant baptism is like evolution. To believe in evolution is to hold others in contempt for not accepting the obvious. However, when asked to produce the evidence for the theory, then individuals run around looking for missing links. In other words, none exist.
5. The easiest proof for the baptism of infants would be to find one plain instance of the practice in the New Testament.
6. A second easy proof for the baptism of infants would be to find one Biblical command to perform this practice.
7. Infant baptism is based on false assumptions, false analogies, and the sound of silence.
8. While honest Reformed theologians, such as Louis Berkhof, will state there are no instances of infant baptism in the Bible, they immediately move on to declare there are inferences for the practice.
9. Like in evolution, the inference of infant baptism becomes a fact. The theory gives way to dogmatism. The imaginary perception becomes objective reality. This is circular reasoning.

10. One inference for infant baptism is based on the account of household baptism. The argument is that there must have been infants in the home.

Cornelius. Acts 10:47 Can any man forbid water, that these should not be baptized, which have received the Holy Ghost as well as we? 48 And he commanded them to be baptized in the name of the Lord. Then prayed they him to tarry certain days. ...Acts 11:14 Who shall tell thee words, whereby thou and all thy house shall be saved.

The Philippian jailer. Acts 16:33 And he took them the same hour of the night, and washed their stripes; and was baptized, he and all his, straightway. 34 And when he had brought them into his house, he set meat before them, and rejoiced, believing in God with all his house.

Special Note.

No infants are mentioned in the context. And, those who were baptized, believed. What is clear, is the baptism of believers.

Stephanas. 1 Corinthians 1:16 And I baptized also the household of Stephanas: besides, I know not whether I baptized any other.

1 Corinthians 16:15 I beseech you, brethren, (ye know the house of Stephanas, that it is the firstfruits of Achaia, and that they have addicted themselves to the ministry of the saints,) 16 That ye submit yourselves unto such, and to every one that helpeth with us, and laboureth. 17 I am glad of the coming of Stephanas and Fortunatus and Achaicus: for that which was lacking on your part they have supplied.

Special Note.

Like in all the other household baptism passages, there is no indication of children, and certainly no indication of infants. Furthermore, “*the house of Stephanas...addicted themselves to the ministry of the saints*”, indicates a level of maturity, not infancy.

Lydia. Acts 16:14 And a certain woman named Lydia, a seller of purple, of the city of Thyatira, which worshipped God, heard us: whose heart the Lord opened, that she attended unto the things which were spoken of Paul. 15 And when she was baptized, and her household, she besought us, saying, If ye have judged me to be faithful to the Lord, come into my house, and abide there. And she constrained us. 16 And it came to pass, as we went to prayer, a certain damsel possessed with a spirit of divination met us, which brought her masters much gain by soothsaying. Acts 16:40 And they went out of the prison, and entered into the house of Lydia and when they had seen the brethren, they comforted them, and departed.

Special Note.

Most Bible commentators recognize that Lydia was a gifted business woman. There is no indication that she was married, or there were children in the house. This is a very weak inference, contextually, for suggesting infant baptism.

11. Bible doctrine is not built on an inference, or on probabilities, let alone weak probabilities.
12. The Paedobaptist will say, "Prove to me there were no infants in the household. Show me the prohibition for infant baptism." The proper answer is this. "I do not have to prove to you a negative. The burden of proof for your argument rests upon you, not me. You must show there were infants in the household to justify your position of infant baptism."
13. If household baptism was as important as Covenant theologians want to make it in order to include infants, why did Paul diminish his role in baptizing individuals?
 - *1 Corinthians 1:14 I thank God that I baptized none of you, but Crispus and Gaius; 15 Lest any should say that I had baptized in mine own name. 16 And I baptized also the household of Stephanas: besides, I know not whether I baptized any other.*
14. It has been argued by Paedobaptist that no expressed commandment for infant baptism is needed because of covenant theology. The argument is that because infants were circumcised in the OT, since baptism has replaced the sign of circumcision in the NT, infants should be baptized in order to receive the sign of the covenant relationship with the fathers. God has not put the infants, God has not put the children outside of the covenant relationship.
15. For the sake of argument, let us image, for just a moment, that the early Jewish disciples who circumcised their babies, baptized their infants after their conversion. Let us assume that in their minds, baptism had taken the place of circumcision.
 - *John 3:22 After these things came Jesus and his disciples into the land of Judaea; and there he tarried with them, and baptized. 23 And John also was baptizing in Aenon near to Salim, because there was much water there: and they came, and were baptized.*
 - *John 4:1 When therefore the Lord knew how the Pharisees had heard that Jesus made and baptized more disciples than John, 2 (Though Jesus himself baptized not, but his disciples,)*
 - *Mark 10:13 And they brought young children to him, that he should touch them: and his disciples rebuked those that brought them. 14 But when Jesus saw it, he was much displeased, and said unto them, Suffer the little children to come unto me, and forbid them not: for of such is the kingdom of God. 15 Verily I say unto you, Whosoever shall not receive the kingdom of God as a little child, he shall not enter therein. 16 And he took them up in his arms, put his hands upon them, and blessed them.*

Special Note.

The large number of baptisms by John and by Jesus were public, and widely known. Had infants been baptized, that too would have been widely known. But what do we read? We read that the disciples of Jesus were upset when the children were brought to Jesus because only adults were baptized. Disciples were baptized, not children, and not infants. There is nothing about baptizing infants or children in this text. Jesus touched the children, and blessed the children, but there is not a word of inference to be drawn for infant baptism.

16. Turning to another argument, Paedobaptist appeal to the writings of the apostle Paul.

- *Colossians 2:11 In whom also ye are circumcised with the circumcision made without hands, in putting off the body of the sins of the flesh by the circumcision of Christ: 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.*

17. The argument is that circumcision is united with baptism by a statement of parallelism. To speak of circumcision, is to speak of baptism, and to speak of baptism, is to speak of covenantal circumcision.

Special Note.

It has been shown that infant baptism is not based upon a clear example in Scripture. It has been shown that infant baptism is not based upon a clear command in Scripture. Perhaps infant baptism can be established by a theological construct in OT Scripture. This is what is attempted by Paedobaptist in Colossians 2:11-12. The following argument is made.

- The Bible is a unity. The unifying principle is established upon God's everlasting covenant of grace. The sign and seal of the covenant of grace, in the OT, was circumcision, and that ritual was given to the males in infancy. When they came of age, they were to ratify, by personal faith, the sign which they had received in their body. The sign and seal of that covenant, in the NT, is baptism. Baptism should be given to those in infancy, just like circumcision was given to those within the covenant of grace.

Response.

Reformed Christian parents who baptize their children know they are giving the sign and seal of salvation to a person who is totally depraved, and is desperately in need of salvation. Nevertheless, Reformed Christian parents tend to believe that God looks upon their child differently than He looks upon the child of unbelieving parents. By virtue of their parents being believers, the children are in a covenant relationship with God.

Question. "Specifically, what is that covenant relationship that a covenant child of a believing parent has with God, that a child of an unbelieving parent does not have?"

The important concept of a special relationship with God of "children of the covenant", due to believing parents, is to establish that the covenant sign of circumcision in the Old Testament, grounded in the covenant of grace, continues into the NT in the form of baptism.

According to the Heidelberg Catechism, adult baptism means something specific.

Question 69. How art thou admonished and assured by holy baptism, that the one sacrifice of Christ upon the cross is of real advantage to thee?

Answer: Thus: That Christ appointed this external washing with water, adding thereto this promise, that I am as certainly washed by his blood and Spirit from all the pollution of my soul, that is, from all my sins, as I am washed externally with water, by which the filthiness of the body is commonly washed away.

Question 70. What is it to be washed with the blood and Spirit of Christ?

Answer: It is to receive of God the remission of sins, freely, for the sake of Christ's blood, which he shed for us by his sacrifice upon the cross; and also to be renewed by the Holy Ghost, and sanctified to be members of Christ, that so we may more and more die unto sin, and lead holy and unblamable lives.

Notice that Salvation is a Settled Fact
And is Illustrated by Baptism

Question 71. Where has Christ promised us, that he will as certainly wash us by his blood and Spirit, as we are washed with the water of baptism?

Answer: In the institution of baptism, which is thus expressed: "Go ye, therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost", Matt.28:19. And "he that believeth, and is baptized, shall be saved; but he that believeth not, shall be damned.", Mark 16:16. This promise is also repeated, where the scripture calls baptism "the washing of regeneration" and the washing away of sins. Tit.3:5, Acts 22:16. (a)

Question 72. Is then the external baptism with water the washing away of sin itself?

Answer: Not at all: for the blood of Jesus Christ only, and the Holy Ghost cleanse us from all sin.

Question 73. Why then does the Holy Ghost call baptism "the washing of regeneration," and "the washing away of sins"?

Answer: God speaks thus not without great cause, to-wit, not only thereby to teach us, that as the filth of the body is purged away by water, so our sins are removed by the blood and Spirit of Jesus Christ; but especially that by this divine pledge and sign he may assure us, that we are spiritually cleansed from our sins as really, as we are externally washed with water.

According to the Heidelberg Catechism, the baptizing of infants is based upon the certainty that the blood of Jesus was shed for them. Nevertheless, the baptism of infants is different, for it is based upon the hope of salvation.

Question 74. Are infants also to be baptized?

Answer: Yes: for since they, as well as the adult, are included in the covenant and church of God; and since redemption from sin, by the blood of Christ, and the Holy Ghost, the author of faith, is promised to them no less than to the adult; they must therefore by baptism, as a sign of the covenant, be also admitted into the Christian church; and be distinguished from the children of unbelievers as was done in the old covenant or testament by circumcision, instead of which baptism is instituted in the new covenant.

18. A child is looked upon as elect, and called holy, by virtue of his relationship to his parents and his union with them in the covenant. A person cannot say that the child is suddenly put outside the covenant of grace at a certain age, and then reincorporated back into the covenant of grace based upon faith.
19. If a child is in the covenant and considered holy, then how does he become unholy at a certain age?