

Baby Baptism Ad Rebuttal

This article was written in response to an ad that appeared on July 7, 2010, in a Spencer, IA newspaper. The ad (sponsored by the Spencer Church of Christ) attacked the basis, purpose, and validity of Infant Baptism. Our intention is to provide a Scriptural answer to the issues raised. The ad's arguments are quoted, numbered, and underlined.

BABY BAPTISM

Did you know infant baptism is not in the N.T.?
If you were baptized as a baby,
1-how do you know you were?
2-it was done without your permission.
If someone tells you there were infants in the households of those adults baptized in the N.T., that is an assumption they can't prove. So your infant baptism has no basis. Actually all those baptized in the N.T. were penitent immersed believers in Jesus.
On infant baptism:
1-there is not authority for it
2-infants are safe and innocent of sin
3-infants can't confess Jesus
4-sprinkling/pouring are not baptism
5-infant baptism has the wrong purpose
6-the result is wrong.

1. "INFANT BAPTISM IS NOT IN THE N.T."

This is an argument from silence. One could use the same reasoning to say that it was so common in the New Testament that it didn't need to be mentioned explicitly.

2. "IF YOU WERE BAPTIZED AS A BABY, HOW DO YOU KNOW YOU WERE?"

This statement suggests that Baptism is an "experience" that one can "feel" and reference in his life. If that is the case, it reveals the difference we have in understanding Baptism's essence and purpose. Baptism is either something that man does for God, or, something God does for man. The Bible shows that Baptism is what God does for man. We are merely recipients in Baptism. Through Baptism we receive God's grace.

Romans 6:3-4 ³ *Or do you not know that as many of us as were baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into His death?* ⁴ *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.*

Baptism unites us with the death of Christ. We are passive recipients of grace. God does the acting, not we.

Titus 3:5 ⁵ *Not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to His mercy He saved us, through the washing of regeneration and renewing of the Holy Spirit.*

The Bible only knows of one washing of regeneration – Baptism. Baptism is a means whereby God conveys His grace to us.

Acts 2:38 ³⁸ *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.*

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

The passage contains two aorist causative middle imperatives and could be literally translated: "Get yourself baptized and get yourself washed as to your sins." (A Greek Grammar of the New Testament, Blass-Debrunner)

Mark 16:16 ¹⁶ *He who believes and is baptized will be saved; but he who does not believe will be condemned.*

3. "IF YOU WERE BAPTIZED AS A BABY, IT WAS DONE WITHOUT YOUR PERMISSION."

The statement is true, course. As a baby, no one asked you or got your permission to baptize you into the family of Christ. The same thing happened with the act of circumcision in the Old Testament. This was done on the 8th day, without the child's permission – yet, it brought him into the family of God (cf. Genesis 17:12ff.) Baptism brings one into the family of Christ. *"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."* Galatians 3:26-27

Faith is not a decision but a gift. If it were a work on man's part, then, salvation would not really be by grace. *"And if by grace, then it is no longer of works; otherwise grace is no longer grace."* Romans 11:6

The creation of faith is God's work, not ours. Even the faith that receives God's grace is God's gift, not our doing.

Ephesians 2:8-9 *For by grace are ye saved, through faith, and that not of yourselves, it is the gift of God, not of works, lest any man should boast.*

Does the Holy Spirit need our permission to create faith in our hearts? The Bible answers:

John 3:5ff. ⁵ *Jesus answered, "Most assuredly, I say to you, unless one is born of water and the Spirit, he cannot enter the kingdom of God. ⁶ That which is born of the flesh is flesh, and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit. ⁷ Do not marvel that I said to you, 'You must be born again.' ⁸ The wind blows where it wishes, and you hear the sound of it, but cannot tell where it comes from and where it goes. So is everyone who is born of the Spirit."*

4. "IF SOMEONE TELLS YOU THERE WERE INFANTS IN THE HOUSEHOLDS OF THOSE BAPTIZED IN THE N.T. THAT IS AN ASSUMPTION THEY CANNOT PROVE."

To say that there were NO infants in these households, is an assumption that cannot be proven. This is one of the reasons why we do not base our faith on arguments of silence from Scripture.

The fact that infants can and do have faith is not a matter of assumption at all.

2 Timothy 3:15 *"From infancy (Brephos) you have known the holy Scriptures, which are able to make you wise for salvation through faith in Christ Jesus."*

Paul uses the term Brephos – which means "babies" – *"Then they also brought infants to Him that He might touch them; but when the disciples saw it, they rebuked them..."* (Luke 18:15) Brephos occurs 9 times in the New Testament, in eight different verses (Luke 1:41; 1:44; 2:12; 2:16; 18:15; Acts 7:19; 2 Tim 3:15; and 1 Pet 1:22). It always means "infant," or even "unborn child."

5. "ALL THOSE BAPTIZED IN THE N.T. WERE PENITENT IMMERSSED BELIEVERS IN JESUS."

The idea that immersion is the only valid form of baptism is not based on Scripture. In Scripture, the word for baptize is the Greek word Baptizo, not Bapto. If Bapto had been used, then a case could possibly be made for mandatory immersion because of the way Bapto, "to dip," is used in the New Testament. Baptizo can mean "dip," but it can also and more often does mean "wash, apply water, pour," etc. To impose "immersion" on the meaning of Baptizo does not fit its Scriptural usage.

We firmly believe that the Bible should interpret itself. Those who wish to study the Bible's usage of the term Baptizo are encouraged to read, "The Method of Applying Water in Baptism" by Missionary David Koenig (appended to this document).

6. "THERE IS NO AUTHORITY FOR INFANT BAPTISM."

Matthew 28:18-20 *"All authority has been given to Me in heaven and on earth. ¹⁹ Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, ²⁰ teaching them to observe all things that I have commanded you; and lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the age." Amen.*

Jesus gave the command to baptize all nations. Are babies part of all nations? Also, notice the order of the Great Commission: make disciples by baptizing them and teaching them.

7. "INFANTS ARE SAFE AND INNOCENT OF SIN."

We are aware of no passage in Scripture that teaches this. There are plenty of passages that teach that everyone is born in sin. We received our sinful nature from our parents, who got it from their parents, all the way back to Adam and Eve.

John 3:6 *That which is born of the flesh is flesh.*

Romans 5:12 *Therefore, just as through one man sin entered the world, and death spread to all men, because all sinned. (The fact that babies can die shows that they are sinful. "The wages of sin is death.")*

Romans 3:22-23 *For there is no difference; for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God.*

Psalms 51:5 *Behold, I was brought forth in iniquity, and in sin my mother conceived me.*

All are conceived and born in sin. The Bible mentions no way of salvation for any person apart from saving faith in Jesus. Children must be brought to faith in Christ if they are to be saved. To say that children are innocent and need no Savior until they reach an "age of accountability," is purely a deduction that is not found in Scripture. The Scriptures portray only one plan of salvation -- saving faith in Christ -- not two.

John 14:6 *Jesus said to him, "I am the way, the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through Me.*

Mark 16:16 . . . *he who does not believe will be condemned.*

8."INFANTS CAN'T CONFESS CHRIST."

Can infants believe in Christ? Can they have saving faith?

Matthew 18:5-6 ⁵ *Whoever receives one little child like this in My name receives Me.* ⁶ *Whoever causes one of these little ones who believe in Me to sin, it would be better for him if a millstone were hung around his neck, and he were drowned in the depth of the sea.*

"Little child" comes from the word Paedia, which can mean "a young child, a little boy, a little girl, infant, of a child just recently born." In the parallel passage in Luke, the word Brephos (see above) is used. "Little ones" comes from the word Mikros, which emphasizes their *smallness or infancy*.

Mark 10:15 ¹⁵ *Assuredly, I say to you, whoever does not receive the kingdom of God as a little child will by no means enter it."*

Matthew 21:16 . . . *and said to Him, "Do You hear what these are saying?" And Jesus said to them, "Yes. Have you never read, 'Out of the mouth of babes and nursing infants You have perfected praise'?"*

1 John 2:13 *I write to you, fathers, because you have known Him who is from the beginning. I write to you, young men, because you have overcome the wicked one. I write to you, little children, because you have known the Father.*

Does a child have to think about his faith in Jesus in order to have it? If that is the case, then do Christians lose their faith if they become unconscious or are asleep? Faith is not a rational decision. It is a change of heart that only God can produce. A heart of faith is one that rests on Christ. It is just as much a miracle that this can happen to an adult (in a sense, more so!) as it is when it happens to the smallest of children.

Colossians 2:11-13 *You were... 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.*

If people are dead in trespasses and sins (cf. Ephesians 2), faith cannot be a rational decision they make for themselves. Producing Christian faith is as much a work of God as was the raising of Lazarus, who, being dead, had no ability to make himself alive. His resurrection was entirely the work of God, as is a person's spiritual resurrection (cf. 1 Cor. 2:9-10, 14). Only after a person is brought to faith can they make God-pleasing decisions. While babies may not be able to make adult decisions, they can still receive the free gift of faith. God's grace knows no discrimination or demands any prerequisites.

9. "SPRINKLING AND POURING ARE NOT BAPTISM."

Please see the response to statement No. 5 above.

10. "INFANT BAPTISM HAS THE WRONG PURPOSE."

It is not clear what is meant by this statement. The Bible IS clear about the purpose of Baptism. This is not something we do for God, but something God does for us. Please see No. 2 above.

11. "THE RESULT IS WRONG."

Again, it is not clear what is meant by this statement. If the ad is refuting the idea that a person can believe and live as he pleases as long as he was once baptized, we would agree. The Bible does not teach "Once saved, always saved." It is possible for people to lose the faith that was planted in their hearts at Baptism. For that reason, we are to live in daily repentance.

Summary An unbiased reading of the passages on Baptism present it as the precious Gospel of purest grace that is meant for all sinners, babies included. It is not an act of obedience that we do for God. It is an act of grace that God does for us. Baptism creates faith and forgives sin, not because a church teaches that, but because that is what the Scriptures say it does.

The Method of Applying Water in Baptism

THE METHOD OF APPLYING WATER IN BAPTISM

Introduction

Most if not all in this essay may be old hat to some. But it is not so long and established to some who call themselves Lutheran. Even so-called Lutherans today deny aspects of baptism that we have held from Scripture as true for long ages.

The method of applying water in baptism is an issue we meet with over and over again in India and other foreign fields. A sizeable majority of men trained and in training to be pastors in the BELC were not Lutheran in background and brought up with the truth on baptism. Even among the CLCI's men in training the questions arise perennially. Such is the influence of the Reformed and of the Pentecostal/Charismatic false teaching.

There is the temptation to go to the catacombs and point at the engravings of seashells and say, "There is the evidence that water was poured." Equally tempting is recourse to the Didache, which says that all three methods are acceptable. In the end of course it is Scripture which must rule, no matter how splendid the courtiers standing beside the throne. They are still beside the throne with the Word ruling.

The Word Not Used

βάπτω is not the word used for baptism in the New Testament.

If this were the word, then we would be justified in saying that one must be dipped or immersed for baptism. But this is not the word. This word does mean 'dip.'

- Lk. 16:24 "...send Lazarus to dip the end of his finger in water..."
- Jn.13:26 "...I shall give this morsel when I have dipped it. So when He had dipped the morsel..."
- Rev. 19:13 "He is clad in a robe dipped in blood..."
- In the next passages there is a word with a slight variation to it, but meaning the same, ἐμβάπτω.
- Mt.26:23 "...He who has dipped his hand in the dish with Me..."
- Mk. 14:20 "It is one of the twelve, one who is dipping bread in the same dish with Me."
- Jn. 13:26 "...I shall give this morsel when I have dipped..."

The Greek Word in Context

We look at the word for baptism in Scripture as it is used in Scripture. This is the rule. Words change meaning and are used differently in different writings. Let's look at a word that changed its meaning. In James 2:9 we read "...and are convicted by the law as transgressors." παραβάτης is the word used for transgressor.

In our literature based on Scripture it means only "transgressor." But previously in secular literature is meant mostly a warrior beside a charioteer, or a certain kind of foot soldier. Or consider the word grace, which earlier meant 'that which brought joy and pleasure.' Its sense in the Bible though is overwhelmingly 'grace' or 'favor.' So it is with words in Scripture that we consider them in their context, that is, how they are used in the Bible. βαπτίζω is the word used in the Bible for 'baptize.' We find in India that there has been even some purposeful mistranslation of this word and its derivatives. 'Immerse' appears. This is a case of reading into Scripture instead of letting Scripture interpret Scripture. A far more honest translation to have used is the English cognate 'baptize.' While some ask the question,

‘What’s in Word?’, this can lead astray. For the etymology of a word may not account for a changed usage. We ask in this study, “How is the word in its setting in Scripture?” Scripture is a rule unto itself: inspired, infallible, self-explaining.

Pertinent Words (in the KJV from Young’s Concordance)

βάπτισμα is found in Lk.20:4 and 21 other places as ‘baptism.

βαπτισμός is found in Mk.7:8, 4 , Heb.9:10 as ‘washing’ , while it is translated as ‘baptism’ in Heb. 9:10

Βαπτιστής is used of John the ‘baptizer’ or ‘baptist’ in Mt. 3:1 and 13 other times.

βαπτίζω is the word for ‘baptize’ used in Mt. 3:11 and 73 other times. Once it is used of John the ‘Baptist’. It is used twice as ‘be baptized’ (mid.pass.). Twice it is translated as ‘wash’ . Lk.11:38 is one of those times.

βάπτω is used for ‘dip’ in Jn.13:26 and two other times.

έμβάπτω is used in Mk.14:20 for ‘dip’ and in two other places.

νίπτω is the word translated ‘wash’ in Jn. 9:7 and 16 other times.

άπολούω is the word used for ‘wash’ in I Cor. 6:11 and one other time. While the word without its prefix is used for ‘wash’ six times.

λουτρόν is translated ‘washing’ in Eph. 5:26 and Titus 3:5.

ράνιζω is used in Heb. 9:19 and three other times in Hebrews as ‘sprinkle.’

Pouring

The idea of ‘pouring’ is far more consonant with baptizo than any others, especially than ‘immerse.’

- Jn.1:33 “...’He on whom you see the Spirit descend and remain, this is He who baptizes with the Holy Spirit.’” Here the idea of descending, alighting upon, coming down from above is used in the same sentence with the baptism of the Holy Spirit. It seems far more sensible to look at that which came upon Jesus as that which comes upon us.
- The example though that seems so conclusive is Acts 1:5(and its attendant explaining passages) “John baptized with water, but before many days you shall be baptized with the Holy Spirit έκχέω is used in Acts 2:17 as ‘poured out.’ Peter explains the Pentecost happening quoting Joel, “And in the last days it shall be, God declares, that I will pour out My Spirit upon all flesh...” John the baptizer also previously stated in Mt. 3:11 “I baptize you with water for repentance, but He who is coming after me is mightier...He will baptize you with the Holy Spirit and with fire.” The Spirit was ‘poured out upon ‘ and fire was upon the heads. It was not a case of being immersed in the Spirit or of fire. And now go backwards from that ‘pouring’ understanding and with common sense note that usage for John’s baptism in Acts 1:5 and Mt. 3:11. We take the word in its understandable, contextual usage. The idea of the Spirit being ‘poured out’ is also elsewhere as in Is. 32:15 “until the Spirit is poured out upon us from on high...”
- Lk. 12:49-50 “I came to cast fire upon the earth; and would that it were already kindled! I have a baptism to be baptized with; and how I am constrained until it is accomplished.” Does it sound right to quote John, ‘I have an immersion to be immersed in’? That seems farfetched. As fire comes down upon, so persecution

would fall upon, be poured out upon Jesus. Our Lord asked James and John, "Are you able to drink the cup I drink, or to be baptized with the baptism with which I am baptized?" The persecution and judgment fell upon. He was not immersed in it. Is. 53:5 "...upon Him was the chastisement that made us whole..."

- Acts 10:45 "And the believers from among the circumcized who came with Peter were amazed, because the gift of the Holy Spirit had been poured out even on the Gentiles." Here we have again that word 'poured.' When describing this later, Peter said, "As I began to speak the Holy Spirit fell on them just as on us at the beginning. And I remembered the word of the Lord, how He said, 'John baptized with water, but you shall be baptized with the Holy Spirit.'" Acts 11:15-16 So we have 'baptized' explained with the words 'poured out' and 'fell upon.'

Washing

In Scripture baptize is used in the sense of 'washing.'

- Lk. 11:38 "The Pharisee was astonished to see that He did not first wash before dinner." The word 'wash' is 'baptize.'
- The passages that have so much to say on this subject are Mk.7:2-4 "they saw that some of His disciples ate with hands defiled, that is unwashed (nipto). (For the Pharisees, and all the Jews, do not eat unless they wash (nipto) their hands, observing the tradition of the elders; and when they come from the market place, they do not eat unless they purify (baptizo) themselves; and there are many other traditions which they observe, the washing (baptizo) of cups and pots and vessels of bronze..." Going back to Lk. 11 as well as here nipto and baptizo are interchangeable for washing hands or utensils. In Mk.7, even if one does not accept the manuscript evidence for "beds" or "tables", it is still stretching it to say that the "vessels of bronze" had to be immersed. Some have maintained that baptizo means washing the whole body immersed and that it corresponds with louo. But here baptizo is used with nipto and "hands..."
- ἀπολούω is used in Acts 22:16 for 'wash away' in "...Rise and be baptized, and wash away your sins..." Here 'wash' sounds fine and reflects on the baptizo method. But forcing a word, as some do, would mean saying it really means 'drowning' or 'immersing.' That is not the picture conveyed. In the two passages where λουτρόν is used in the NT the reference is to baptism. Eph. 5:26 "that He might sanctify her, having cleansed her by the washing of water with the word." Titus 3:5 "He saved us...by the washing of regeneration and renewal in the Holy Spirit."
- There are those that say that louo means to wash the whole body, whereas nipto means to wash a part. In a variety of passages this seems true. A real clear one on louo is Heb.10:22 "...our bodies washed with pure water." But in Acts 16:33 the jailer "washed (louo) their wounds..." This was a part of the body that was washed. In Lk. 11:38 in the washing before eating it (baptizo) can't mean the whole body. The argument from the immersion people is to lock baptizo in with louo, as a washing of the whole body, thus immersion. That will not work with baptizo's use in the Word.

Sprinkling

In the freedom Scripture gives us in the method of applying water, sprinkling is a viable method.

- Ez.36:25 "I will sprinkle clean water upon you, and you shall be clean from all your uncleannesses..." In the OT there was a sprinkling of blood, Lev. 4:6,16:15, which cleansed. It is not hard to use that method to convey the cleansing of baptism. And have you ever wondered about the question of the Pharisees? Jn.1:25 "They asked him, 'Then why are you baptizing, if you are neither the Christ, nor Elijah, nor the prophet?'" Where in the OT could the Pharisees get the idea of baptismal cleansing — Ez. 36:25 perhaps?
- Heb. 9:19 "...he took the blood of calves and goats, with water and scarlet wool and hyssop, and sprinkled both the book itself and all the people." This is among several passages that refer to 'sprinkling' in Hebrews.

Here the word in Greek for 'sprinkle' is the equivalent for the same word in the Hebrew in Ez. 36. In Heb. 9:10 we have reference to "various ablutions (baptismos)" and in 6:2 to "ablutions (baptismon)." These could refer to the one of Eph. 4:5, John's, the Jewish ceremonial according to the Law and tradition including the Jewish conversion practice that included baptism, and back to what was referenced in Heb.9:19.

Immersion

- This which is held to in such an ironclad manner by some finds little backing in Scripture. Rom. 6:3-4 "...baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into His death...buried therefore with Him by baptism into death..." is not pointing out a method for applying water. It tells us that baptism ties us to his sacrificial death. In v.4 συνθάπτω is "we were buried" that means in the earth with Him. He was our substitute.
- In Col.2:11-15 we have the expression again in v.12 "buried with Him in baptism." Look at the context. Circumcision in the OT time initiated one into the covenant relationship. Now baptism does that and it lashes us to Him. The method of applying water is not presented.
- I Cor. 10:1-2 has reference to "baptized into Moses." If there is immersion in water in this historical reference, it has to do with the Egyptians being drowned and not our old flesh. There was a relationship with Moses in connection with water, yes. And there is a relationship with Christ through water and the Word. It is as Peter says by means of water, I Pet. 3:21, and so baptism is used.
- Some will even go back to Naaman's example. In II Kings 5:10 the command in the Greek translation of the OT uses louo in v.10, while carrying out by Naaman in v.4 uses baptizo. This is translated 'dip' with the argument then carried forward to the NT use of baptizo. That really is going well beyond common sense and the use of language. Why not, with this disconnected reference then also enjoin a sevenfold application of water and of Jordan water?
- How much water was used in the NT baptisms? Always enough water on hand for immersion is beyond the normal readings at times. Acts 16:33 has the jailer and his family baptized at once at night. Acts 10:27 has many people gathered at Cornelius' house. In v.47 Peter declared, "'Can anyone forbid water for baptizing these people...?'" Just think with common sense what this says. Does it ask 'forbid going to water' or 'forbid water being brought'? Our problem is not that one can be baptized by immersion. The opponents' problem is that 'they' command that baptism must be by immersion.

Anointing

- Ps. 23:5 mentions "thou anointest by head with oil." The applying of oil by pouring can also remind from the OT practice of God's anointing resting upon us.

And this has to be our prayer that God's Holy Spirit rests upon us that He imparts to us the proper understanding of Scripture. We have surely received the Spirit from God. I Cor. 2:12 There is much twisting of Scripture to get from a word or passage simply what it does not say. The clear Word tells us that water must be used, but not how to use that water in one of the three common methods to the exclusion of the other two.

By Missionary David Koenig

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