

A Guide To Why Do We Baptize Our Children?

1. We must begin with the commonality of Evangelicals – salvation by faith in Jesus Christ and the Bible as the Word of God
2. We must recognize that there are differences in Evangelical traditions - “Agree to Disagree” over secondary or tertiary matters
3. In Baptism, the question becomes, “Who should be baptized?”
Believers OR Believers and their Children?

I. The People of the Covenant

God has always worked through Covenants, but who is included?

1. Believers and Unbelievers

Not only were Unbelievers included in the Covenant along with Believers, but the children of Believers and Unbelievers were included as well!

2. Adults and Their Children

The individualism of our present culture is not the Biblical picture revealed in Scripture. God has always worked through Families!

Old Testament Examples: Noah in Genesis 6:18, Abraham in Genesis 17:7, Moses in Exodus 20:5-6, and David in Psalm 132:11-12.

New Testament Examples: Peter in Acts 2:38-39 and Paul in I Corinthians 7:14.

II. The Covenant Sign of Baptism

How did Baptism develop in the New Testament?

1. Old Testament Temple Washings

This practice was used for purification before coming to worship and offering sacrifice. It was a ritual washing that represented cleansing. Ephesians 5:25-26
It symbolizes God’s people being able to approach Him without fear.

2. Baptism by John the Baptist

At their conversion, both male and female proselytes (non-Jews converting to Judaism) were baptized. This is a great picture of a corrupt people who repent and are made part of God’s people, the “righteous remnant.” John’s message was “repent and be baptized.” Matthew 3:5-6

3. Baptism by the Apostles

Jesus came to identify with the righteous remnant, and he prepared the disciples for this ministry, as well. Matthew 28:19 – The Great Commission. At first it was Jews who had been baptized, then the Gentiles began coming into the Church. Male Jews all had circumcision performed as infants as part of the Covenant sign given to Abraham in Genesis 17, but baptism was for both male and female. With the Gentiles, circumcision was not part of their heritage, and the Apostles didn't require this on them. Baptism then became the only sign of the Covenant people. Colossians 2:11-12 clearly shows this transfer linking “circumcision done by Christ” to baptism.

III. The Significance of Baptism as the Sign of the Covenant

Symbols have different meanings to different people. Baptism always means the same thing – a person is joined to the Covenant people. However, to different people it carries a different significance.

1. Meaning to Believers (Believers Baptism)

What did circumcision mean to Abraham? Genesis 17:10 - He believed before receiving the sign of circumcision.

It outwardly expressed an inward faith.

The sign of circumcision was a seal of the righteousness he already had in faith! This should be the same with baptism as an outward expression of an inward faith.

2. Meaning to Infants

What did circumcision mean to those receiving as infants—who did not yet believe? Circumcision was NOT a demonstration of faith on the part of the infant; rather, it symbolized their participation in the Covenant and reminded them of their need to have a personal faith.

The outward sign called them to an inward change.

Jeremiah 4:4 describes a spiritual circumcision to those have already received physical circumcision and anticipates the day when they would come to faith.

Christians today that baptize infants claim the parallel between circumcision and baptism. Baptism does not mean that the infant is saved! As members of the covenant community, God now urges baptized infants to “circumcise their hearts” and come to faith in Jesus Christ.