

# Covenant Baptism

Adult Sunday School

June 5, 12, 19, 26

2022



# I. Review: Covenant Theology

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  - *“Every male among you shall be circumcised.”* (Gen 17:10)



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## Circumcision as Oath-Consecration

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- “For no one is a Jew who is merely one outwardly, **nor is circumcision merely outward and physical**. But a Jew is one inwardly, and **circumcision is a matter of the heart...**” (Rom 2:28-29)

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- “And at the end of eight days, **when he was circumcised**, he was called Jesus, the name given by the angel ...” (Luke 2:21)

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- “At that time the LORD said to Joshua, ‘Make flint knives and circumcise the Israelites again. ... And this is the reason why Joshua circumcised them: **all the males** of the people who came out of Egypt, all the men of war, had **died in the wilderness ... since they had not obeyed the LORD.** (Josh 5:2, 4, 6)

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- “... **he was cut off out of the land of the living,** stricken for the transgression of my people” (Is 53:8)

# I. Review: Covenant Theology

## Circumcision in Old Testament:

- Symbolized an oath /consecration to the Lord.
- Symbolized the divine judgment the recipient already deserved as a child of Adam.
- Communicated the promise of LIFE to those who would identify (by faith) with the divine Redeemer-Substitute/Judgment-Bearer (Christ).
- Symbolized the judgment (“cut off”) that would befall all those consecrated to God who trusted in their own sinful obedience, rather than God’s Provision.
- Was applied to Israelites and their infant male offspring.

## II. Circumcision and Baptism

Circumcision was a covenant sign instituted by God, wherein the bloody ritual signified and assured (upon condition of faith) Israelites of their union with Christ, and their partaking of the benefits of the covenant of grace, and their consecration to be the Lord's.



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“Baptism is a sacrament, wherein the washing with water in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost, doth signify and seal our ingrafting into Christ, and partaking of the benefits of the covenant of grace, and our engagement to be the Lord's.” (Westminster Shorter Catechism, Q&A 94)

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Christ's crucifixion as a "circumcision" and "baptism" of death for us:

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**"... he was cut off out of the land of the living, stricken for the transgression of my people" (Is 53:8) – CIRCUMCISION of the FLESH/BODY**

**"I have a baptism to be baptized with, and how great is my distress until it is accomplished!" (Luke 12:50) – BAPTISM of under God's WRATH**

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Therefore ... does baptism—like circumcision—*also* communicate a promise of LIFE for those who identify (by faith) with God's crucified Substitute?

**YES! YES! YES! YES! YES! YES! YES! YES!**



# III. Baptism and Conversion



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**“In him also you were circumcised with a circumcision made without hands, by putting off the body of the flesh, by the circumcision of Christ, <sup>12</sup> having been buried with him in baptism, in which you were also raised with him through faith in the powerful working of God ...” (Col 2:11–12)**

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## Baptism and Conversion

**“Do you not know that **all of us who have been baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into his death?**<sup>4</sup> We were buried therefore with him by baptism into death, in order that, just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, we too might walk in newness of life.” (Rom 6:3-4)**

# III. Baptism and Conversion

“But now thus says the LORD, he who created you, O Jacob, he who formed you, O Israel: ‘Fear not, for I have redeemed you; I have called you by name, you are mine.  
<sup>2</sup> **When you pass through the waters, I will be with you; and through the rivers, they shall not overwhelm you;** when you walk through fire you shall not be burned, and the flame shall not consume you.  
<sup>3</sup> For I am the LORD your God, the Holy One of Israel, your Savior.’” (Is 43:1-3a)

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- It is a sign of their consecration to the Lord.
- It officially marks their entry into the covenant community of God's people on the basis of the faith of their parents.
- It is a sign of the judgment they deserve as sinners.
- It is a promise of life for those who would trust in God's provision of a Substitute-Redeemer, who suffered the curse for sin not his own.



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***“But the core significance of both rites is Jesus Christ.”*** (S. Ferguson)





# VI. Responses to Baptist Views

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1. The “classic” Baptist sees baptism as a subjective testimony rather than an objective promise.

Ans: baptism is a sign of God's activity, not ours (Gen 17:11, Rom 4:11).

*“Christian baptism is the immersion of a believer in water in the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit. It is an act of obedience **symbolizing the believer’s faith** in a crucified, buried, and risen Savior, **the believer’s death to sin**, the burial of the old life, and the resurrection to walk in newness of life in Christ Jesus. **It is a testimony to his faith in the final resurrection of the dead.**”*

–Section 7, “Baptism and the Lord’s Supper,” *Baptist Faith and Message*, 2000 edition).

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2. **The Baptist sees Jer 31:34 as demanding that all church members be believers (cf. “know the Lord”).**

Ans: But this view misses that Jer 31:34 is pointing to the CONSUMMATION of God’s kingdom, AFTER the time when some church members will break covenant (i.e., apostatize). Moreover, the Baptist vision is impossible to uphold in practice (Heb 10:29).

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- 3. The Baptist sees infants as excluded from the covenant community, which often conflicts with the spirit of their church practices.**

Ans: Baptism not only “dedicates” the child to God, it marks God’s covenantal “dedication” to the child (Acts 2:38-39).

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4. **The Baptist view overlooks the *rationale* for Paul's exhortation to children to "obey your parents *in the Lord*" (Eph 6:1).**

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- 5. The Baptist view understands Jesus to inaugurate a New Covenant era that is more restrictive than its OT counterpart.**

Ans: This cuts against the wider, fuller, trans-national character of post-Pentecost Christianity.