

## “A Sign of the Covenant – Covenant Baptism”

Genesis 17:10-14; 22-27

### SHOULD WE BAPTIZE OUR CHILDREN?

1. **This is not an issue of SALVATION.** That would be heretical. Ref. Ephesians 2:8-9
2. **This is not an issue of CHURCH TRADITION.** That would be irresponsible. Ref. Mark 7:1-9; Colossians 2:8
3. **This is not an issue which is UNIMPORTANT.** That would be unbiblical.
4. **This is not an issue of which Christians need to break fellowship.** That would be unloving.
5. **This is not an EASY issue.** Both sides appeal to Scripture and rest on assumptions. Be Bereans! Acts 17:10-12

### MANY OPPOSE BAPTIZING CHILDREN FOR ONE OF THREE REASONS

1. **Heretical teachings about infant baptism.**
  - Some churches/denominations teach ‘baptismal regeneration’ (baptism saves an infant). This is heresy.  
-E.g., Roman Catholic, Church of Christ, some CREC and Lutheran churches
2. **Misunderstandings about what it means/signifies.** Baptism is NOT a sign of the infant or child’s faith.
3. **They have never been shown the Biblical basis for baptizing infants/they don’t see it in the Bible.**

### BIBLICAL FOUNDATIONS FOR COVENANTAL INFANT BAPTISM

1. **God’s covenants are made repeatedly not with individuals, but with families/households.**
  - (Noah) Genesis 9:9: Behold, I establish my covenant with you and your offspring after you
  - (Abraham) Genesis 17:7-10: ...you and your offspring after you... (5 x’s in 4 verses)
  - (Isaac) Genesis 17:19: ...and his offspring after him. (Jacob) Genesis 28:13: ...to you and to your offspring.  
-Ref. Numbers 18:19; Nehemiah 9:8; Isaiah 59:21

→ **God works in and through families (not exclusively, but primarily).**
2. **God commanded Abraham (and all Israel) to be circumcised and to put the sign on their household.**
  - NOTE: The focal point of God’s command to circumcise is Abraham’s house. v.12, 13, 23 (2 X’s), 27 (2 X’s)
  - The specificity of God’s command to circumcise includes everyone—beginning at 8 days old.
  - The practice included males of all ages—Ishmael was 13 at the time and he was circumcised. 17:25  
-Bible is clear: every male whether born in Abraham’s house or bought from foreigners. v. 12, 13, 23, 27

→ **The idea is NOT to circumcise them because they are infants, but because they are part of your house.**
3. **Circumcision in the OT showed they were part of God’s visible covenant community.**
  - Whenever an adult joined God’s covenant community, he received the sign of circumcision. E.g. Ex 12:48
  - Whenever a child was born into the household of a believer, they received the sign. Gen 17:12; Lev 12:3
  - Their hope is that God will be merciful and make that sign a reality in the child’s heart and life someday.

→ **It did NOT show that they were actually saved and believing in God.** Rom 2:28-29; 9:6-8; Jer 9:25-26
4. **The Bible shows connections between the OT and NT covenantal signs.**

<u>OT Signs</u>		<u>NT Sacraments</u>
Circumcision (Gen 17)	→	Baptism (Matt 28:19; Mark 16:16)
Passover Meal (Exod 12)	→	Lord’s Supper (I Cor 11)

  - Circumcision is compared to baptism in Colossians 2:11-12 and Acts 2:38-39.
  - The Passover Meal is compared to the Lord’s Supper (aka. Communion) in Matt 26 and John 13.
5. **The NT continues both the acts and language of God working through families.**
  - Jewish ruler’s dead daughter raised to life. Mt 9:18-26
  - Epileptic/demon possessed son healed by Jesus. Mt 17:14-18
  - Widow’s dead son raised. Lk 7:11-17
  - Capernaum official’s dying son healed. John 4:46-54
  - The children of any believer are “holy” (‘set apart’ as special). 1 Cor 7:14
  - Acts 2:39: For the promise is for you and for your children and for all who are far off, everyone whom the Lord our God calls to himself.

## 6. The NT continues to show God's people putting the sign (now baptism) on their entire households.

- Acts 16:13-15 (Lydia). The Lord opened her heart to pay attention to what was said by Paul. And after she was baptized, and her household as well, she urged us, saying, "If you have judged me to be faithful to the Lord, come to my house and stay (v.14b-15a). → Lydia was converted & her household was baptized
- 1 Corinthians 1:16: Paul says he baptized the household of Stephanus.
- Acts 18:8: Crispus, the ruler of the synagogue in Corinth, believed in the Lord with his entire household... and many of the Corinthians hearing Paul believed and were baptized.
- Acts 16:25-34 (the Philippian jailer). Then he brought them out and said, "Sirs, what must I do to be saved?" And they said, "Believe in the Lord Jesus, and you will be saved, you and your household." And they spoke the word of the Lord to him and to all who were in his house. And he took them the same hour of the night and washed their wounds; and he was baptized at once, he and all his family. Then he brought them up into his house and set food before them. And he rejoiced along with his entire household that he had believed in God. (v.30-34).

## CONCLUSION

### 1. God never once commanded his NT people to cease this 2000 year-old commandment and practice of applying the sign of the covenant to their children. In fact, we see the practice of household baptisms.

- In the OT or NT, where do we ever see young children of believers who are not a part of God's covenant?  
...or believing parents commanded to withhold the sign of the covenant from their children?  
...or children of believers come to faith later in life, then are baptized?

### 2. When parents come in faith to present their children for baptism, their hope is that God will be merciful and make that sign a reality in the child's heart and life someday.

→ Both the parent(s) and the children have responsibilities and privileges when they do this.

Parents: Your children must still believe in Christ to be saved. You need to teach them this truth.  
You must raise them by nurturing, guiding, and correcting their spiritual life.

→ How do we recognize when children of believers come to faith? Answer: Communion.

**3. It is ok to disagree on this issue of baptism.** Let each man be convinced in his own mind. There are some issues that we must be willing to fight and even die over—this is not one of them. We are a Reformed and Presbyterian church and will remain so, but that does not mean that every member has to agree with this teaching—but we will teach and practice it.

- When you see an infant or child baptism, it is OK to rejoice for those parents and that child. You can agree, and certainly ought to agree, with their prayers that the Lord would graciously save that baby in the course of time.

*The Shorter Catechism of the Westminster Confession of Faith*

#### Q. 91. How do the sacraments become effectual means of salvation?

A. The sacraments become effectual means of salvation, not from any virtue in them, or in him that doth administer them; but only by the blessing of Christ, and the working of his Spirit in them that by faith receive them.

#### Q. 92. What is a sacrament?

A. A sacrament is an holy ordinance instituted by Christ; wherein, by sensible signs, Christ, and the benefits of the new covenant, are represented, sealed, and applied to believers.

#### Q. 93. Which are the sacraments of the New Testament?

A. The sacraments of the New Testament are baptism and the Lord's supper.

#### Q. 94. What is baptism?

A. 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.

#### Q. 95. To whom is baptism to be administered?

A. Baptism is not to be administered to any that are out of the visible church, till they profess their faith in Christ, and obedience to him; but the infants of such as are members of the visible church are to be baptized.