

# Week Seven

Quarter 3

Baptism

# Outline

- The Mode and Meaning of Baptism
- The Subjects of Baptism
- The Effect of Baptism
- The Necessity of Baptism
- The Age for Baptism
- Remaining Questions

# Baptism Introduction

- There is much disagreement within Christianity on this subject
- Is it a sacrament or ordinance?
  - Both – Grudem uses the terms interchangeably
- Is this a “major doctrine”?
  - Grudem’s perspective is no
  - Other denominations disagree
- Position of the chapter is “Baptistic”
  - Baptism is appropriately administered only to those who give a believable profession of faith in Jesus Christ
- *Paedobaptist* – infant baptism that does not lead to immediate regeneration

# Immersion vs. Sprinkling (1)

- Immersion is the mode of baptism seen in the New Testament
  - The Greek word *baptizo* means “to plunge, dip, immerse” something in water
  - Only immersion makes sense for many NT passages
    - John the Baptist baptized “in the River Jordan” (Mark 1:5) → Not near, beside, or by
    - Jesus, after being baptized, “came up out of the water” (Mark 1:10)
    - John the Baptist “was baptizing at Aenon near Salim, because there was much water there” (John 3:23)
    - When Philip had shared the gospel with the Ethiopian eunuch, “as they went along the road they came to some water, and the eunuch said, ‘See here is water! What is to prevent my being baptized?’” (Acts 8:36) → apparently sprinkling never came to their minds

# Immersion vs. Sprinkling (2)

- Immersion is the mode of baptism seen in the New Testament (cont.)
  - The symbolism of union with Christ in His death, burial, and resurrection seems to require baptism by immersion
    - “Do you not know that all of us who have been baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into His death? We were buried therefore with Him by baptism into death, so that 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)
    - “You were buried with Him in baptism, in which you were also raised with Him through faith in the working of God, who raised Him from the dead” (Col 2:12)
    - Baptism by sprinkling or pouring simply misses this symbolism
  - The amazing truths of passing through the waters of judgment safely, of dying and rising with Christ, and of having our sins washed away, are truths of momentous and eternal proportion and ought to be an occasion for giving great glory and praise to God (pg 969)
- If there’s any doubt, why only do the minimum for God?

# The Subjects of Baptism – Three Views

- Those who give a believable profession of faith – showing evidence (Baptistic)
- All people, including infants (Roman Catholic)
- All people, including infant children of believing parents (Protestant Paedobaptist)

# Baptistic View

- Only those who give a believable profession of faith should be baptized (believers baptism)
- New Testament support
  - “Those who received his word were baptized” (Acts 2:41)
  - “When they believed Philip as he preached good news about the kingdom of God and the name of Jesus Christ, they were baptized, both men and women” (Acts 8:12)
  - “Can anyone forbid water for baptizing these people who have received the Holy Spirit just as we have?...[then Peter] commanded them to be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ” (Acts 10:47-48)
  - “As many of you as were baptized into Christ have put on Christ” (Gal 3:27)
- Baptism is a symbol of the beginning of the Christian life, and hence should only be given to those who in fact begun the Christian life

# The Roman Catholic View

- Baptism is necessary for salvation as the act of baptism itself causes regeneration
- Quotes from *Fundamental of Catholic Dogma* by Ludwig Ott
  - “Baptism is that sacrament in which man being washed with water...is spiritually reborn”
  - “Baptism...effects: a) the eradication of sins, both original sin and, in the case of adults, also personal, mortal or venial sins; b) inner sanctification by the infusion of sanctifying grace”
  - “Baptism by water...is, since the promulgation of the Gospel, necessary for all men without exception for salvation”
- Remember that Catholics hold that sacraments work apart from faith, so saving faith is not required (*ex opere operato*)
- Luther fought against this as now works are required for salvation (by grace alone!)

# What Basis is There for Baptism Being Required for Salvation? (1)

- “Unless one is born of water and the Spirit, he cannot enter the kingdom of God” (John 3:5)
- Rebuttal
  - Ezekiel spoke of a spiritual washing
    - “I will sprinkle clean water upon you, and you shall be clean from all your uncleannesses...A new heart I will give you, and a new spirit I will put within you” (Ezek 36:25-27)
  - Paul speaks of spiritual washing
    - “the washing of regeneration” (Titus 3:5)
    - Christ gave Himself up for the church “that He might sanctify her, having cleansed her by the washing of water with the word” (Eph 5:26)
  - John 3:5 could be rephrased “Unless one has their sins washed away and is spiritually regenerated, he cannot enter the kingdom of God”

# What Basis is There for Baptism Being Required for Salvation? (2)

- “Baptism...now saves you” (1 Pet 3:21)
- Rebuttal
  - Read the rest of the context
    - Peter then explains that baptism saves you “not as a removal of dirt from the body, but as an appeal to God for a clear conscience”
    - Not as an outward, physical act which washes dirt from the body, but as an inward, spiritual transaction between God and the individual
  - It could be rephrased “Baptism now saves you – not the outward physical ceremony of baptism but the inward spiritual reality which baptism represents”
  - To be baptized rightly is to make such an “appeal” to God
    - “Please, God, as I enter this baptism which will cleanse my body outwardly I am asking You to cleanse my heart inwardly, forgive my sins, and make me right before you” (pg 974)

# The Protestant Paedobaptist View

- Baptism is rightly administered to all infant children of believing parents
- Held by Lutheran, Episcopalian, Methodist, Presbyterian, and Reformed churches
- Arguments for:
  - Infants were circumcised in the Old Covenant and baptism is parallel to circumcision
  - Household baptisms

# The Circumcision Argument

- Circumcision was administered to all Israelite children when they were eight days as a sign of entrance into the community of God's people (the covenant community)
- In the New Testament, the outward sign of entrance into the "covenant community" is baptism
- "In Him also you were circumcised with a circumcision made without hands, by putting off the body of flesh in the circumcision of Christ; and you were buried with Him in baptism, in which you were also raised with Him through faith in the working of God, who raised Him from the dead" (Col 2:11-12)

# The Circumcision Rebuttal (1)

- What circumcision and baptism symbolize different things
  - The old covenant had a physical, external means to entrance
    - You're only a Jew if your mom was
    - It was open to all Jews
  - The new covenant has a spiritual, inward means to entrance
    - You're only a Christian if you change
    - Membership is open to anyone
    - "Not all who are descended from Israel belong to Israel" (Rom 9:6)

# The Circumcision Rebuttal (2)

- The New Testament does not talk about a “covenant community” made up of believers and their unbelieving children (and relatives and servants)
  - Instead, it only talk of the church – the fellowship of the redeemed
  - Membership is gained through voluntary, spiritual, internal change though being born again and having saving faith
- There were a lot of similarities between the Old Testament and New, but a lot of changes as well

Old Testament	New Testament
Ate physical manna	Feed on Jesus Christ, the true bread from heaven
Drank physical water	Drink of the living water of eternal life
A physical temple	Christians are spiritual temples
Israel was a physical land	We hope for a “better country, that is, a heavenly one”
Based physical descendants of Abraham	Based on descendants of Abraham based on faith

# The Household Baptism Argument

- An entire household was baptized in several instances
  - “The Lord opened her heart to give heed to what was said by Paul. And when she was baptized, with her household...” (Acts 16:15)
  - “Now I [Paul] did baptize also the household of Stephanas” (1 Cor 1:16)
  - “And he [the jailer] took them [Paul and Silas] that very hour of the night and washed their wounds, and immediately he was baptized, he and all his household.” (Acts 16:33)
- It is hard to imagine that no infants existed in all of these households

# Household Baptism Rebuttal

- Most household baptisms were the result of the household coming to faith
  - 1 Cor 16:15 states that “the household of Stephanas were the first converts in Achaia, and they have devoted themselves to the service of the saints”
  - Acts 16:32 tells us that Paul and Silas “spoke the word of the Lord to him and to all that were in his house”
  - When Paul preached at Corinth, “Crispus, the ruler of the synagogue, believed in the Lord, together with all his household” (Acts 18:8)
- The only verse not fitting this example is Acts 16:14-15
  - The household make up is not discussed
    - It doesn’t say “including infants”
  - Establishing a doctrine on one verse that is inconclusive is dangerous

# Other Protestant Paedobaptistic Arguments

- What Is the purpose of baptism?
  - Roman Catholics
    - Spiritual regeneration
  - Baptist perspectives
    - A symbol that the inward regeneration has occurred
  - For Protestant Paedobaptists
    - The only alternative is that it symbolizes that a regeneration will occur in the future
    - Or more accurately, a probable future regeneration
- Finally, practice of Protestant Paedobaptistic baptisms can lead to a person presuming that they have no additional need for regeneration

# The Effect & Necessity of Baptism

- Effect
  - Communicates to others that spiritual regeneration has occurred
  - Provides a spiritual blessing to the one baptized for obedience
- Necessity
  - It is not necessary for salvation
    - Thief on the cross was not baptized, yet went to heaven (Luke 23:43)
    - Justification happens at the point of saving faith – not baptism
  - Some point to “He who believes and is baptized will be saved; but he who does not believe will be condemned” (Mark 16:16)
    - The answer is that this does not say what will happen to one who believes but is not baptized

# The Age of Baptism

- Grudem
  - The standard answer is when they are old enough to give a believable profession of faith
  - How old is that?
    - Baptists in the UK (and a movement in the US) is to wait until after 12
    - Other churches set the age at 7
- Other notes
  - The word “age of accountability” is often used in this discussion
  - Bar Mitzvah’s are when the child is 12
  - Israelites under 18 were not held accountable for not taking the promised land the first time
  - The real downside of delaying a baptism is to stop them from being obedient to God
    - Maybe use this as a guide?
  - NLCC leadership is currently discussing this topic

# Do Churches Need to Be Divided Over Baptism?

- Is this a “major doctrine”?
  - For Catholics, yes
  - For Baptistics, no
  - For Protestant Paedobaptists, no
- The Evangelical Free Church of America (EFCA) has a compromise allowing both
  - Grudem does not like a compromise
  - His perspective is that a Protestant Paedobaptist’s beliefs accommodate a Baptist’s, but not vice versa
- Your thoughts?

# Who Can Baptize?

- Scripture does not specify
- All Christians are part of the priesthood (1 Pet 2:4-10)
  - Clergy / ordained ministers normally do it in order to safeguard the practice and keep it from abuse
  - There are many cases in Protestant churches, though, where the father baptizes their child
- It should be done within the fellowship of the church
  - Communicates to the body one's testimony
  - Blesses the congregation as well as the recipient

# Reading For Next Week

- Chapter 50
  - The Lord's Supper
    - Homework – questions 1,2,3,5
- Chapter 51
  - Worship
    - Homework – questions 1,2,4,5