

Infant Baptism

by Heath Rogers

Some churches administer baptism to infants. This practice is a celebrated event in many families. While I do not doubt the sincerity of those who engage in or endorse this practice, I deny that it is a scriptural practice. Authority for the practice of infant baptism is not found in emotional arguments, past experiences or family traditions. The question is settled by looking unto the Word of God. The Bible does not contain a single example of infant baptism, nor any command requiring the administration of infant baptism. Yet I believe we can arrive at the truth on this subject by looking at what the Bible says concerning the purpose and prerequisites for baptism.

First, let's consider the purpose of baptism. What does baptism accomplish? The Bible teaches that baptism is for the remission of sins. "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 2:38). Ananias said to Saul, "And now why are you waiting? Arise and be baptized, and wash away your sins, calling on the name of the Lord" (Acts 22:16).

Baptism is for those who need the forgiveness of their sins. Infants have no sins that need to be forgiven. Babies do not inherit the sins of their parents. "The soul who sins shall die. The son shall not bear the guilt of the father, nor the father bear the guilt of the son. The righteousness of the righteous shall be upon himself, and the wickedness of the wicked shall be upon himself" (Ezek. 18:20). Since infants have no sin, they have no reason to be baptized.

Second, we must consider the conditions of scriptural baptism; that is, what does a person have to do in order to be baptized? In the Bible, one had to hear and believe the gospel before he could be baptized. "He who believes and is baptized will be saved..." (Mark 16:16). This is the pattern that is found throughout the book of Acts. "But when they believed Philip as he preached the things concerning the kingdom of God and the name of Jesus Christ, both men and women were baptized" (Acts 8:12). Philip would not baptize the Ethiopian eunuch until he heard the eunuch confess his faith. "Now as they went down the road, they came to some water. And the eunuch said, 'See, here is water. What hinders me from being baptized?' Then Philip said, 'If you believe with all your heart, you may.' And he answered and said, 'I believe that Jesus Christ is the Son of God'" (Acts 8:36-37).

Since in the Bible baptism was administered for the remission of sins, and since no infant has sins that need to be forgiven, we must conclude that baptism is not for infants. In the Bible, baptism was administered after belief, and since no infant is capable of understanding and believing the gospel, we must conclude that baptism is not for infants. In the Bible, baptism was administered after a confession of faith. Since no infant is capable of confessing faith, we must conclude that baptism is not for infants.

If the Bible teaches that infants are candidates for baptism, that we should baptize infants, or that infants were baptized in New Testament times, then let someone produce the verse that teaches such. If not, then let us all, as many as fear the Lord, have the honesty and resolve to stop any practice, regardless of how sentimental, that finds no support in the scriptures.

What about your baptism? Does it fit the pattern set forth in the scriptures? Were you sprinkled as a baby, or were you immersed as a believer for the remission of your sins?

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