

## **A Simple Biblical Explanation of Infant Baptism.**

***Infant Baptism is Commanded by God in the Holy Scriptures.***

***It is of the apostolic tradition, not a tradition of men.***

***Therefore the Reformed and Presbyterians Practice Infant Baptism.***

Why did Calvin, Knox, Zwingli, Bullinger, Beza, William Perkins, John Owen and most of the Puritans, Matthew Henry, John Cotton, Jonathan Edwards, Bavinck, Kuyper, Hodge, Warfield, Vos, John Murray, G.I. Williamson, and R.C. Sproul embrace infant baptism? Why do Joel Beeke, Robert Godfrey, Sinclair Ferguson, Augustus Nicodemus, and many other esteemed theologians and pastors embrace infant baptism? Here we provide a simple, Biblical explanation of infant baptism.

1. God instituted the sacrament of circumcision as a sign of His “everlasting covenant” with His chosen people, known as the covenant of grace. Under the Abrahamic covenant and continuing with the Mosaic covenant (the old covenant), circumcision was applied to adults like Abraham, to Gentile converts, as well as to all the infant sons of Israel.

Genesis 17:12-13: “He who is eight days old among you shall be circumcised, every male child in your generations, he who is born in your house or bought with money from any foreigner who is not your descendant. He who is born in your house and he who is bought with your money must be circumcised, and My covenant shall be in your flesh for an everlasting covenant.”

Exodus 12:48: “And when a stranger dwells with you *and wants* to keep the Passover to the LORD, let all his males be circumcised, and then let him come near and keep it; and he shall be as a native of the land. For no uncircumcised person shall eat it.”

2. The Church is the new covenant continuation of Israel, the one people of God (Romans 11). The New Testament teaches the continuity of the one people of God, the Church, the Israel of God (Gal. 6:16).

Acts 7:38: “This is he, that was in the church [ἐκκλησία , ekklesia] in the wilderness with the angel which spake to him in the mount Sina, and *with* our fathers: who received the lively oracles to give unto us” (KJV).

Acts 7:38: “This is he who was in the congregation in the wilderness with the Angel who spoke to him on Mount Sinai, and *with* our fathers, the one who received the living oracles to give to us” (NKJ).

3. Circumcision under the old covenant and water baptism under the new covenant are both signs and seals of repentance and faith.

Romans 4:11-12: “And he received the sign of circumcision, a seal of the righteousness of the faith which *he had while still* uncircumcised, that he might be the father of all those who believe, though they are uncircumcised, that righteousness might be imputed to them also, and the father of circumcision to those who not only *are* of the circumcision, but who also walk in the steps of the faith which our father Abraham *had while still* uncircumcised.”

Acts 2:38: "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."

4. New covenant baptism is "the circumcision of Christ". Thus, it is a continuation of the everlasting sign of circumcision that marked the everlasting covenant of grace that God made with Abraham in Genesis 17.

Colossians 2:11-12: "In Him you were also circumcised with the circumcision made without hands, by putting off the body of the sins of the flesh, by **the circumcision of Christ**, buried with Him in **baptism**, in which you also were raised with *Him* through faith in the working of God, who raised Him from the dead."

5. The New Testament teaches that Christians are "children of promise" just as "Isaac was." The children of promise, such as Isaac, were circumcised as infants. The New Testament never repeals the practice of applying the sign of God's covenant to the children of believers. The logical inference is that the children of believers also receive the sign of the covenant of grace, the circumcision of Christ, which is water baptism, as infants.

Galatians 3:29: "And if you *are* Christ's, then you are Abraham's seed, and heirs according to the promise."

Galatians 4:28: "Now we, brethren, as **Isaac was**, are children of **promise**."

6. The New Testament teaches that the children of believers are ceremonially "clean" and "holy," using the terminology of the Old Testament. The covenant relationship between God's covenant people and their seed (children) has not changed. God is the same God—yesterday, today, and forever (Hebrews 13:8). God still works through families.

1 Corinthians 7:14: "For the unbelieving husband is sanctified by the wife, and the unbelieving wife is sanctified by the husband; otherwise your children would be unclean, but now they are holy."

To be the child of a believer, "a covenant child," does not guarantee that a child is regenerate (born again) or one of God's elect. It does mean the child is a recipient of the blessings of the covenant for those who repent and believe. Water baptism can never regenerate; it is only a sign and seal of faith and the promise of God.

7. The children of believers are by no means cast out of the covenant. It is only false believers, Pharisees, the works righteous, false religionists and their seed who are cast out:

Galatians 4:30-31: "Nevertheless what does the Scripture say? "Cast out the bondwoman and her son, for the son of the bondwoman shall not be heir with the son of the freewoman." So then, brethren, we are not children of the bondwoman but of the free."

8. In the New Testament, there is no example of the child of a believing parent being baptized as a child or as an adult. Therefore, the argument for or against infant baptism is an argument from silence, based on one's interpretation of the Bible. However, the evidence clearly favors the continuation of God's everlasting covenant of grace, which treats the children of believers as "clean" and "holy" unless they apostatize or persist in unbelief. Still, the children of believers are

required to profess and confess Jesus as Lord and to evidence faith and repentance in order to receive the Lord's Supper worthily (1 Cor. 11:27-30; Rom. 10:9-10).

And both the parents and the church have a duty to evangelize and disciple the children, to teach them the Gospel and to obey all of Scripture, to nurture personal, family, and corporate worship, and to do the good works for which Christians were created.

In the New Testament, we find household baptisms, just as we find "household" circumcisions in the Old Testament. The Reformed believe it is highly probable that the children of believers were present, and they were baptized.

Cornelius: "There was a certain man in Caesarea called Cornelius, a centurion of what was called the Italian Regiment, a devout *man* and one who feared God with all his household. . . . And he [Peter] commanded them to be baptized in the name of the Lord. Then they asked him to stay a few days" (Acts 10:1-2, 48).

Lydia: "And when she and her household were baptized" (Acts 16:15).

The Philippian jailer: "And he [Paul] took them the same hour of the night and washed *their* stripes. And immediately he and all his family were baptized" (Acts 16:33).

Crispus, the synagogue ruler: "Then Crispus, the ruler of the synagogue, believed on the Lord with all his household. And many of the Corinthians, hearing, believed and were baptized." (Acts 18:8).

Stephanas: "Yes, I [Paul] also baptized the household of Stephanas. Besides, I do not know whether I baptized any other" (1 Corinthians 1:16).

9. The Great Commission calls the church of Christ to baptize Christ's disciples. Based on the New Testament, we understand that this baptism includes believers and their children. We are to obey all that God has commanded in His Word, which includes the applying the everlasting sign and seal of faith, the sign and seal of the everlasting covenant of grace, the sign of the circumcision of Christ, to the children of believers:

"Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all things that I have commanded you; and lo, I am with you always, *even* to the end of the age." Amen. (Matthew 28:19-20).

"Then they also brought infants to Him that He might touch them; but when the disciples saw *it*, they rebuked them. But Jesus called them to *Him* and said, "Let the little children come to Me, and do not forbid them; for of such is the kingdom of God. "Assuredly, I say to you, whoever does not receive the kingdom of God as a little child will by no means enter it."" (Luke 18:15-17; Matthew 19:13-15; Mark 10:13-16).

10. The Bible teaches that there is one Church, which began in the garden of Eden with God's covenant with Adam. There is one olive tree (Romans 11), to which Gentiles have been engrafted. God said that His covenant with Abraham was everlasting. And the sign of the covenant, circumcision, was also everlasting. The New Testament teaches us that the covenant

with Abraham is fulfilled in Christ, who is the promised Seed. The New Testament teaches us that the old covenant rite of circumcision has been abolished. Baptism is the “circumcision of Christ” (Col. 2:11-12) and thus new covenant water baptism replaces the old covenant rite of circumcision. Since children received the sign of the covenant under the old covenant and there is no repeal of this practice in the New Testament, it is assumed that the children of believers must also receive water baptism, which represents the circumcision of Christ, as infants. Adult converts to Christianity, whether from Judaism or paganism, must repent of their sins and also be baptized.

Whether you are an adult or the child of a Christian, you must repent of your sins and trust in Jesus Christ alone for salvation. God calls all men and women, boys and girls, to repent and believe, to turn from their sins and embrace the Gospel, to obey the Gospel and then bear the fruits of repentance. God wants believers and their children to hear the Gospel, be baptized, and become faithful disciples of Christ who obey all things that He commanded in His Word.

Acts 2:39: "For the promise is to you and to your children, and to all who are afar off, as many as the Lord our God will call."

Copyright © 2025 Wabash Bible Ministries.

### **Addendum: Excerpts from Historic Reformed Confessions and Catechisms Regarding Infant Baptism**

#### **Heidelberg Catechism**

Question #74: Should infants also be baptized?

A. Yes.

Infants as well as adults

are included in God's covenant and people, (1)

and they, no less than adults, are promised

deliverance from sin through Christ's blood

and the Holy Spirit who works faith. (2)

Therefore, by baptism, the sign of the covenant,

they too should be incorporated into the Christian church

and distinguished from the children of unbelievers. (3)

This was done in the Old Testament by circumcision, (4)

which was replaced in the New Testament by baptism. (5)

1. Gen. 17:7; Matt. 19:14.

2. Isa. 44:1–3; Acts 2:38–39; 16:31.

3. Acts 10:47; 1 Cor. 7:14.

4. Gen. 17:9–14.

5. Col. 2:11–13.

#### **Westminster Shorter Catechism**

Question #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; (1) but the infants of such as are members of the visible church are to be baptized.(2)

1. Acts 8:36,37; Acts 2:38

2. Acts 2:38,39; Gen. 17:10 compared with Col. 2:11,12; 1 Cor. 7:14

### **Westminster Larger Catechism**

Question #166: Unto whom is baptism to be administered?

A. Baptism is not to be administered to any that are out of the visible church, and so strangers from the covenant of promise, till they profess their faith in Christ, and obedience to him,(1) but infants descended from parents, either both or but one of them professing faith in Christ, and obedience to him, are, in that respect, within the covenant, and to be baptized.(2)

1. Acts 8:36,37; Acts 2:38

2. Gen. 17:7,9 compared with Gal. 3:9,14 and Col. 2:11,12 and Acts 2:38,39 and Rom. 4:11,12; 1 Cor. 7:14; Matt. 28:19; Luke 18:15,16; Rom. 11:16

### **Westminster Confession of Faith**

Chapter 28, paragraphs 4-6

P4. Not only those that do actually profess faith in the obedience unto Christ,(1) but also the infants of one, or both, believing parents, are to be baptized.(2)

1. Mark 16:15,16; Acts 8:37,38

2. Gen. 17:7,9 with Gal. 3:9,14 and Col. 2:11,12; and Acts 2:38,39; and Rom. 4:11,12; 1 Cor. 7:14; Matt. 28:19; Mark 10:13-16; Luke 18:15

P5. Although it be a great sin to contemn or neglect this ordinance,(1) yet grace and salvation are not so inseparably annexed unto it, as that no person can be regenerated or saved, without it;(2) or, that all that are baptized are undoubtedly regenerated.(3)

1. Luke 7:30 with Exod. 4:24-26

2. Rom. 4:11; Acts 10:2,4,22,31,45,47

3. Acts 8:13,23

P6. The efficacy of Baptism is not tied to that moment of time wherein it is administered;(1) yet, not withstanding, by the right use of this ordinance, the grace promised is not only offered, but really exhibited, and conferred, by the Holy Ghost, to such (whether of age or infants) as that grace belongeth unto, according to the counsel of God's own will, in His appointed time.(2)

1. John 3:5,8

2. Gal 3:27; Tit. 3:5; Eph. 5:25,26; Acts 2:38,41

### **Belgic Confession, Article 34**

"We believe our children [the children of believers] ought to be baptized and sealed with the sign

of the covenant, as little children were circumcised in Israel on the basis of the same promises made to our children. And truly, Christ has shed his blood no less for washing the little children of believers than he did for adults. Therefore they ought to receive the sign and sacrament of what Christ has done for them, just as the Lord commanded in the law that by offering a lamb for them the sacrament of the suffering and death of Christ would be granted them shortly after their birth. This was the sacrament of Jesus Christ. Furthermore, baptism does for our children what circumcision did for the Jewish people. That is why Paul calls baptism the “circumcision of Christ.” (Colossians 2:11)