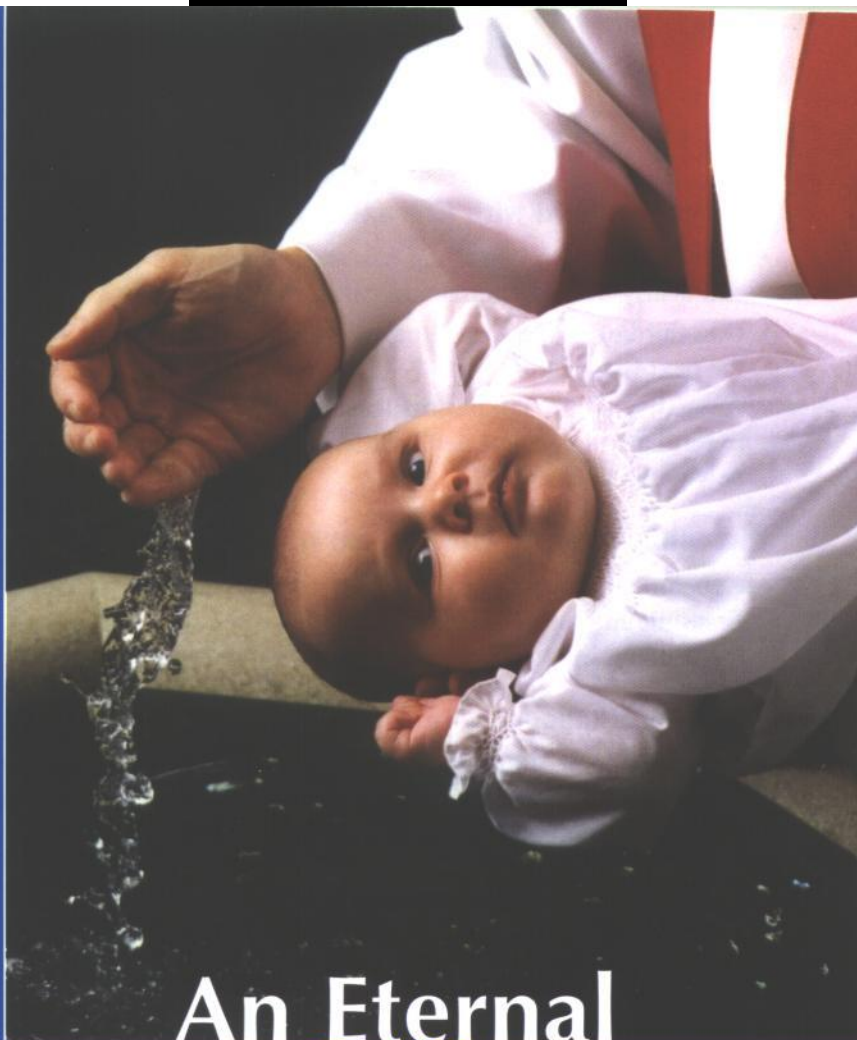


## Baptism Basics



## An Eternal Difference

He saved us, not because of righteous things  
we had done, but because of His mercy.

He saved us through the washing of rebirth  
and renewal by the Holy Spirit. Titus 3:5 NIV

## **I. Some fundamental Christian truths:**

### **A. Original sin.**

When sin first entered into the world, it infected the whole human race from that time on. Human nature is naturally sinful. Since man was created in God's image (righteous and holy), this image has been lost through the fall into sin.

Romans 3:23; Romans 7:18; Genesis 6:5; Mark 7:21-22; Romans 8:7 & 22; Romans 5:12; John 3:6; Psalm 51:5; Ephesians 4:22-24; Ephesians 2:1.

### **B. Jesus Christ.**

Only those who believe in Jesus Christ as their Savior can be saved.

Acts 16:30-31; Romans 10:9; John 3:15-17.

### C. Conversion.

A work of God himself, and not a decision of man himself.

2 Corinthians 4:4-6; I Corinthians 12:3; Ephesians 2:4-9; I Peter 2:9.

### D. How God works.

God the Holy Spirit works through the Word.

John 17:17; II Thessalonians 2:13-14; Romans 10:17; II Timothy 3:15.

## II. Baptism is a sacrament (Latin “sacramentum” meaning “sacred act” or “holy mystery”).

Ecclesiastical terminology used to describe a Biblical truth.

Three things are necessary to be called a Sacrament in Lutheran theology:

- A. Something instituted or established by Christ for Christians to do.
- B. Something that includes an earthly element.
- C. Something that confers a Gospel blessing.

***Baptism is not merely an ordinance or rite of the church (such as a wedding, funeral, confirmation, etc.***

### III. Baptism (*Greek: baptismos*) and baptize (*Greek: baptizo*) – “to wash”

The ceremonial use and/or application of water in various ways: wash, immerse, pour, or sprinkle. Mark 1:8; Mark 7:3-4.

Baptize does not mean to immerse ONLY at the exclusion of the other common definitions. Those who contend that the only proper Baptism is by immersion frequently use two passages of Scripture as “proof passages:”

*“As Jesus was coming up out of the water...”* (Mark 1:10).

They conclude that since Jesus was “coming up out of the water” that he must have been fully immersed. However, this passage says nothing about how far Jesus was actually IN the water or how much of his body was covered. “Coming up out of the water” can be said of the person who was in the water only ankle deep, walking back up on shore.

*“We were therefore buried with him through baptism...”* (Romans 6:4).

They conclude that this “burial” in Baptism means to be “buried in the water” or completely immersed. If this passage is understood in this manner, then the next two words “into death” must also be understood in the same way, thereby making the only legitimate form of Baptism by

immersing and drowning. Even a cursory study of this section of Romans shows that this section refers to Christ's death, burial, and resurrection; and our share in that.

Scripture in NO PLACE dictates how much or how little the amount of water which needs to be used for a legitimate Baptism. If water is applied in some manner to the person according to the directive of Scripture (Matthew 28:19), then it is indeed a legitimate and valid Baptism. Even if Jesus WAS completely immersed when he was Baptized (and we don't know that), it doesn't mean that other methods of application aren't just as Scriptural and legitimate. It is wrong to bind someone's conscience with regard to a particular method of Baptism when Scripture makes no distinction (Colossians 2:16-18).

HISTORY: If we were to visit the catacombs under the city of Rome where the early Christians dwelt because of persecution in the first several centuries of Christianity, there are drawings of people being Baptized by pouring.

HISTORY: The demand for Baptism by immersion only doesn't come to light until the *Anabaptists* appeared on the scene sometime in the 16-17<sup>th</sup> Century.

QUOTE: "It is strange that those who make so much of the method of Baptism should make so little of its content."

#### **IV. The blessings and power of Baptism.**

Baptism is water used according to God's command and connected with his Word; otherwise, it would be just plain water. Scripture teaches that several important things are received through Baptism, namely:

- A. The gift of the Holy Spirit.
- B. The forgiveness of sins.
- C. Deliverance from death and the devil.
- D. Eternal salvation.

Acts 2:14-39; Acts 22:16; Romans 6:3 (cf. Hebrews 2:14-15); Mark 16:16; I Peter 3:20b-22; Galatians 3:26-67; Titus 3:5; Ephesians 5:25-26.

#### **V. The Baptism of adult converts.**

Adult converts are those who can hear and understand the message of the Gospel through the written and spoken Word of God. God the Holy Spirit works through the Word to convert them and bring them to faith in

Jesus Christ as their Savior. They are then Baptized as a response of their faith. The formula of teaching first and then Baptizing is applied. Acts 2:38; Acts 22:16; Acts 8:26-40; Acts 16:29-34.

**We treat adults like babies – and babies like adults**

## **VI. The Baptism of infants.**

God's Word uses various terms with regard to both original sin and Baptism. Terms such as: "all nations, all, every one, entire household, etc." mean just what they say. God in the Bible makes no attempt whatsoever to exclude anybody regardless of age in any of the terms he uses.

Christian parents will first seek the blessings of Baptism for their children; and then as they grow in years, they will faithfully attend to their instruction in the Christian faith. At Baptism, parents and sponsors bear witness to the faith in which the child will be raised. It is wrong to assume that Baptism is a one-way ticket to heaven regardless of a person's faith later in life, thereby making Christian instruction and a Christian life unnecessary. The blessings of Baptism can be rejected by a person in the same manner as a person would reject the message of the Word.

**Baptism is only fire insurance if you pay the premium!**

A. An infant is sinful. Psalm 51:5; Romans 3:23; Job 14:4.

B. An infant can have faith. Psalm 22:9-10; II Timothy 3:15; Mark 9:42; Luke 1:44; Luke 18:15-17; John 3:8.

*Baptism creates a personal saving faith in Jesus Christ as Savior in an infant. Infants are in need of the blessings Baptism confers.*

## **VII. The rejection of infant Baptism.**

Various Christian groups and denominations reject infant Baptism for various reasons. Here are some of the common reasons given by them for doing this:

A. *A person needs to reach an “age of accountability” so they can make the decision to be baptized.*

There is absolutely nothing in Scripture which speaks of such an age, or that Baptism was ever denied until such an age had been reached. To insert this teaching into Scripture is to add something to it. Matthew 15:9; Revelation 22:18.

B. *Children are in a “suspended state of salvation” until they reach the age of accountability.*

Again, Scripture makes no reference to such a teaching.



C. *Children are “innocent,” and therefore have no need of the forgiveness of sins.*

Scripture teaches otherwise (see “Original Sin” as stated previously).

D. *A person needs to repent before they are Baptized.*

This is based upon the words of Acts 2:38 which is near the conclusion of Peter’s Pentecost sermon: “Repent and be baptized, every one of you....” Peter was speaking to adults who were cut to the heart by the words he was preaching. The context here is the prime consideration. In this case, as is the case for every adult convert, repentance and faith come before Baptism.

E. *Absence of Baptism doesn’t condemn a person; unbelief is the thing that condemns.*

This comes from Mark 16:16 and is a correct statement. We must realize however that Baptism is a vehicle of the Holy Spirit and is a faith creating thing in the heart of an infant. For a person to reject Baptism is a statement of unbelief, and therefore condemns.

*In summary:* To reject infant Baptism also rejects some very fundamental doctrines taught in Scripture. The “innocence” of children denies the doctrine of original sin (has anybody ever had to teach their children to misbehave?). To say that children are in some sort of “suspended state of salvation” denies that a personal faith in Jesus Christ is necessary for salvation. And to assert that a person must reach an “age of accountability” so they can make a “decision” regarding their faith, takes the whole process of conversion out of the hands of God and makes it a work of man.

### **VIII. The death of a child.**

The very fact that children suffer illnesses and die, give clear testimony that they are under the curse of original sin. If children were sinless, this would not happen.

**The wages of sin is death**

So, what happens if a child dies before he or she can be Baptized? What happens in the case of a still birth?

This is an area where Scripture is completely silent. We do know, however, that God has bound US to Baptism; but he has NOT bound HIMSELF to it. If God chooses to take the life of a child prior to Baptism, we have to trust entirely in his grace, mercy, and providence in doing

so. Can the Holy Spirit produce faith in other ways? Yes – but we are bound to what God has revealed to us and promised, where there is certainty. Since anti-Baptism statements are statements of unbelief, we would contend that it isn't the absence of Baptism which would condemn, but the despising of it.

“Who can doubt that those Israelite children who died before they could be circumcised on the eighth day were yet saved by the prayers of their parents in view of the promise that God willed to be their God. God (they say) has not limited his power to the sacraments, but has made a covenant with us through his word. Therefore we ought to speak differently and in a more consoling way with Christians than with pagans or wicked people (the two are the same), even in such cases where we do not know God's hidden judgment.” Luther, M. 1999, c1968. *Vol. 43: Luther's works, vol. 43 : Devotional Writings II* (J. J. Pelikan, H. C. Oswald & H. T. Lehmann, Ed.). Luther's Works . Fortress Press: Philadelphia

I also do a liturgy for parents of a miscarriage to speak of that Gospel Hope