*Holy Baptism is for all nations, for infants, for children, for young and old alike. Holy Baptism is a Sacrament, and act of God, not a work of man!*

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**Acts 2: 38**And Peter said to them, “Repent and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins, and you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit. **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.”

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**5**“Whoever receives one such child in my name receives me, **6**but whoever causes one of these little ones who believe in me to sin, it would be better for him to have a great millstone fastened around his neck and to be drowned in the depth of the sea. Matthew18:5

**THE SACRAMENT OF BAPTISM**

By Rev. Dan Domke

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 Holy Baptism has been in use for nineteen centuries. Millions of children and adults have been baptized. Yet how many people outside the church know why the Christian Church still continues this practice? More importantly, how many inside the Church are aware of the continuing relevance of their baptism?

 For some Christians, baptism is merely a church tradition, a rite which is not very important to the institutional church (e.g. the Salvation Army's position). For millions of "cultural” Christians in the state churches of Europe [[1]](#endnote-1)and for an ever growing number of mainline church members in the United States baptism is simply a social custom, something just to be done."

**A History of Baptism**

 When the serious Christian student turns to the New Testament, he will discover nowhere do the Biblical writers explain what it means to baptize. Why? The answer is simple. The rite of baptizing was not in itself new. In fact, it was ordinary in that it was practiced on a regular basis. Everyone knew what it was. Soldiers entering the army were "baptized". Baptisms were performed by the Jews; the most prominent type of baptism was proselyte baptisms.

**Jewish Proselyte Baptism - The Tebilah**

 The rite of Jewish proselyte baptisms developed out of the Levitical requirements for ceremonial purity on the part of anyone who would participate in the worship of Israel's God. Since every Gentile was by definition "unclean", it was only natural to demand that a Gentile convert be purified of his uncleanness before being allowed to enter into the full exercise of his newly gained religious status.

 The chief elements and characteristic feature of proselyte baptism are known to us from rabbinic teachings preserved in a book called the Talmud. From this source we learn that gentile converts to Judaism were required to make this religious transition by accepting circumcision, in the case of men. In the case of both men and women they left their gentleness behind by undergoing the babilah, or baptism. This transition was completed for both men and women by offering a sacrifice in the temple.

 Significantly, as baptismal obligation applied to both men and women some rabbis like Rabbi Hillel, made baptism -- rather than circumcision -- the paramount rite to enter into Judaism. Furthermore, if a proselyte had children at the time of his conversion, they too were baptized on the same occasion in view of the solidarity of Jewish families. Upon coming of age these children could, if they so desired, forfeit their Jewish status without the usual penalty attached to apostasy.

 Before performing the acts of circumcision and baptism, the Rabbis catechized the proselyte in such a way as to establish the sincerity of his motives. The baptism itself was formally witnessed by at least two synagogue representatives who at the same time gave further exhortations and instructions in the Law. The actual rite was then performed by total immersion of the wholly naked person. Women attended female proselytes, while male witnesses stood within earshot, but out of sight.

 This proselyte baptism was looked upon as more than a ceremonial observance. It was an unrepeatable rite of initiation by which the gentile penitently abandoned his former, unclean condition and dedicated himself to the God of Israel and to God's call to "purity". At his baptism, the proselyte was given a new name as a symbol of his entry into God's community, and of his passing from "death" to life.[[2]](#endnote-2)

 When John the Baptizer came baptizing in the wilderness of Judea, the act of baptizing was not what was unusual. What was unusual was that he demanded repentance and baptism of all people, even the Jewish religious leaders.

 Furthermore, he connected this baptism with the coming kingdom of God a kingdom that centered in Christ. The Greek word Baptizo, Baptizo...translated as "baptize" is found in such verses as Matthew 3:11, Mark 7:4, and Acts 22:16. The basic thought behind them all is "washing", a "cleaning".

**The Substance of Baptism**

 Must water and water only, be used? Couldn't we substitute, if we so desired, some other liquid or substance?

 From Matthew 3:11 we learn that John the Baptizer used water. Jesus, in John 3:5, says that we must be "born of water and the Spirit." The Apostle Paul, in Ephesians 5:26, speaks of the "washing of water with the word." We, therefore, are on dangerous ground when we substitute any other substance.

**Water's Symbolism**

 Water symbolizes the double effect of the sacrament. It both destroys and makes alive, both judges and saves. As the unbeliever in Noah's day and as the Egyptians in the days of Moses suffered their judgment and destruction at God's hand in the flood and the Red Sea, so our sinful self is judged and drowned in Holy Baptism.

 Similarly, as Noah and his family and as the Israelites with Moses were delivered from death and given life through the waters that surrounded them, so the water connected to the promise in the gospel through which we passed in baptism saves us from eternal death and brings us the Spirit's new life. (I Peter 3:20-21).

Hear what Peter says regarding the power of baptism:

**"...In it**  (the ark)  **only a few people, eight in all, were saved through water, and this water symbolizes baptism that now saves you also -- not the removal of dirt from the body, but the pledge of a good conscience toward God. It** (baptism with water) **saves you by the resurrection of Jesus Christ..."**

 Baptism and all God's promises of forgiveness and new life are connected. Peter points out Jesus’ resurrection are one of those connections between baptism and new life.

 The water of baptism is a token of this sacrament's cleansing, purifying power. From here the guilt and stain of sin is "washed away"; we stand absolved and purified in the sight of Holy God.

 Baptism's water in and of itself has no power. It is only an outward sign of what the Holy Spirit is doing through the Gospel Word (means of grace) with which the water is being used (cf. II Kings 5:6-14). The Jordan's water did not have any power normally to cure leprosy, but the *promise* of God behind the *command* to Naaman to bathe in it gave that water its unique power.

 Baptism can be compared to an electrified wire. Without electricity the wire is only a wire, but united with electricity it brings light and heat, so the water in Baptism, because it is united to the "electrifying" Word of the Gospel (Romans 1:16) connecting us to Christ and bringing spiritual light and warmth.

**The Method of Baptizing**

 Baptists, Seventh Day Adventists, and the Greek Orthodox, among others, teach that total immersion is the only proper mode of baptizing. Lutherans, Methodists, Roman Catholics say that the mode of application is unessential, only the presence of the water with the Scriptural Word is the essential part.

 Luther and modern day Lutherans are not hesitant to admit that the word baptize (**bavptisma**, **baptivzonte"**) may mean to wash by immersion, though not always. Mark 7:4 says that the Pharisees "Baptizo" themselves before eating, thus meaning "washed". Acts 22:16 (cf. John 13:10-11) puts the terms "be baptized" and "wash" side by side. Matthew 3:11 speaks of the baptism of the Holy Spirit and Acts 2:16-17 speaks of the "pouring out of the Spirit", thus we are convinced that the Bible allows many different meanings of the word and uses water with one word, baptize.

 We do ask that plenty of water be used. As late as 1708 a Lutheran Pastor's failure to use a sufficient quantity of water was punishable with suspension or censure.

 The Didache (Didahce), a church manual from around 120 A.D., says the following about baptism; “Baptize in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, in running water, but if you do not have running water use whatever is available. And if you cannot do it in cold water, use warm. But if you have neither, pour water on the head three times - in the name of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit."

 Christian baptism, unlike self-administered Jewish proselyte baptism, was administered by another. The Greek verb for baptize is most often in the passive form, meaning in baptism something is being done to the Christian by another. Namely, what is being done is a sacred act of God, a Sacrament.

 The Augsburg Confession, Article XIV says: "No man should publically teach in the Church or administer the sacrament unless he is regularly called."[[3]](#endnote-3) For the sake of decency and order in the church service at which baptisms are to be administered, normally it is only the Pastor that administers baptism.

 In baptism the one being baptized is *being publically admitted into the Body of Christ.* Since God has given the power to baptize to the church, (Office of the Keys) the body of Christ should always be present to welcome its new member. Therefore baptism should generally be done during the worship assembly of the church not privately.

 In case of emergencies, any Christian man or woman may baptize. The following is a short form of baptism in case of an emergency.

**A Short form for Holy Baptism in Cases of Necessity.**

In urgent cases, in the absence of the Pastor, any Christian may administer Holy Baptism. In the case of an adult, you must ask them if they believe in Jesus Christ. If so, use the following to baptize them. In the case of an infant or child, you may use the following words also.

 *Take water, call the infant, child or adult by name, pour or sprinkle the water on the head of the infant, child, or adult saying:*

 **I baptize you in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Ghost. Amen.**

 *If there is time, the baptism may be preceded by the following prayer and then the Lord's Prayer:*

 Eternal, merciful God, we pray thee, extend Thy goodness and mercy unto this child (or brother or sister in the case of adults), who now asks; open the door to him (her) who knocks, that he (she) may enjoy the everlasting blessings of Thy heavenly washing and may come to the eternal kingdom which thou hast prepared through Christ, our Lord. Amen.[[4]](#endnote-4)

 Though we approve of emergency baptisms, we realize that these create the impression of a "mechanistic view" of baptism. We must be careful to point out that it is always the Word of God (the Gospel, the means of grace that the Holy Spirit uses to bring saving faith to each person baptized. It is never a work of man, not an empty ritual, but an act of God Himself.

**The Words**

 Lutherans have been accused of believing that "There seems to be no clear evidence that a Trinitarian formula or indeed any fixed formula was absolutely necessary in New Testament times. Faith only in Jesus was necessary."[[5]](#endnote-5)

 As Bible believing Lutheran Christians we must say categorically that this statement is completely false and leads some to think that all Lutherans believe this heresy.

 In Matthew 28:19 Jesus says, "Therefore, go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit,..." Disciples are made through baptizing, and then discipleship is continued through teaching the Word of God. Disciples are Christians so how did they come to be Christians? Through hearing the Word concerning Christ! (cf. Romans 10:17). Baptism, because it is connected to the Gospel, is the Holy Spirit's way of creating saving faith in Christ. God always uses means to save us. When the Word of God, the Gospel, is spoken and heard, God, through this means, creates saving faith in Christ Jesus it the Gospel is the power of God (Romans 1:16. Through this means people, infants and up are forgiven and saved.

 Jesus says to his followers to baptize "in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit." Since this *command* was given to those who acknowledged Jesus as Savior and Lord, baptism performed in non-Trinitarian churches are done without the Lord's blessing. Even if such sectarian groups as Jehovah Witnesses who use the Trinitarian formulation or words, their baptism is not Christian baptism for they deny the existence of the Trinity: Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. Words alone do not make baptism a real baptism, but both words and substance. Language does not depend upon phonetic sound but includes its sense and meaning.

**Is Baptism only a "sign" or does baptism seal and deliver?**

 Calvinism teaches that baptism is simply a ceremony of initiation, a symbol of the grace and faith already possessed elsewhere. They maintain that it is not a sacrament, that is, it does not actually have the power to create faith. As Lutheran Christians we must admit there are instances in the New Testament where the one being baptized already possesses faith, so in this case the baptism strengthens the faith already existing, e.g. the Ethiopian eunuch and St. Paul.

 The Roman, Anglican and Lutheran churches stress that it is not only a symbol but also a sacrament. It is the sacrament that removes the guilt of original sin, though not original sin itself which is finally removed at our "baptism" of physical death. It is a sacrament that has the power to "awaken" infants and strengthen adults' faith in Christ.

Baptism is more than just a sign. Baptism delivers and seals. (Cf. Eph. **John 6:27 God placed His seal of approval on Jesus.**

* + **Luke 3:22 God is well pleased with His Son**
	+ **2 Cor. 1:21-22 21**And it is God who establishes us with you in Christ, and has anointed us, **22**and who has also put his seal on us and given us his Spirit in our hearts as a guarantee. [[6]](#footnote-1)
	+ **Ephesians 1:13 13**In him you also, when you heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation, and believed in him, were sealed with the promised Holy Spirit, **14**who is the guarantee of our inheritance until we acquire possession of it, to the praise of his glory. [[7]](#footnote-2)
	+ **Ephesians 4:30 30**And do not grieve the Holy Spirit of God, by whom you were sealed for the day of redemption. [[8]](#footnote-3)

 With these solemn words from Matthew 28:18-20, Jesus instituted the sacrament of Holy Baptism. His command is: **"literally ‘go (as you-disciples live your Christian life - participle) and make (an imperative – a command) Make disciples** (Christians) **of all nations** (language groups)**...and baptizing them."**

Baptism is a sacrament which has four parts.

**First**, it is a *sacred act*, instituted by God Himself. The pastor pours water on the head of the one being baptized in the name of the Triune God, Father, Son and Holy Spirit.(Matthew 28:18-20) Baptism was instituted by the God-man, Jesus Christ. No man, no church, only God can institute a sacrament.

**Second**, in a sacrament there are certain external means. The external or visible means in baptism is water. Only certain external means may be used in a sacrament, namely, those means which God commands us to use.

**Third**, the external means of a sacrament must be connected with God's Word (Gospel). Baptism is not performed silently, but the pastor speaks the Word of God as he baptizes. He reads the baptismal command and says, *“I baptize you in the name of the Father,"* etc. When the Word comes to the physical element (water) it is sacramental.

**Fourth**, through this sacrament God offers, gives, and seals to us the forgiveness which Christ has merited. Baptism is a means of grace, a means of salvation, a means through which the Holy Spirit produces faith as a gift of God because of God's grace (see Ephesians 5:26; Titus 3:5).

 We have to agree with Peter that baptism saves. He wrote under the direct inspiration of the Spirit of God saying, **"...and this water** (the Noahitic flood) **symbolizes baptism** (actual baptism) **that now saves you also--not the removal of dirt from the body but the pledge of a good conscience toward God. It** (baptism) **saves you by the resurrection of Jesus Christ..."** I Peter 3:21-22a. A good conscience comes when it has been made guiltless by forgiveness.

The flood is the counterpart to baptism; in each, water saves. Noah and his family by the flood; us by baptism. In both cases God gave a *command* and a *promise*. The first symbolized the coming sacrament the second is the sacrament. The flood was a figure of baptism; in both instances, the water spoke of judgment--in the flood, the death of the wicked, in baptism, the death of Christ and the believer and then the resurrection of Christ and then the resurrection of the believer.

 In his book, *Teaching Luther's Catechism,* Girgenshohn says: "The Church's practice in the administration of baptism must always be mindful of two things; **first**, that the ecclesiastical act does not become a kind of magical affair …and **second**, that the ecclesiastical act itself shall not be devaluated and **finally** be practiced as a mere ceremony which can be either performed or omitted.[[9]](#endnote-6)

 Keep in mind the distinction between a valid (real) baptism and a useful (beneficial) baptism. All baptisms of Trinitarian churches are valid baptisms because they are based on Christ's *command* and *promise*. However, for a valid baptism to be also a beneficial baptism, the adult who is baptized must take seriously the words addressed to him at the time of his baptism.

Words of God’s promise which are believed or received on the basis of a faith created and given by the Holy Spirit is a beneficial baptism. That is why in our churches we first instruct new young adult or adult Christians in the Word of God before baptism takes place. Salvation in this case is by faith alone, not the lack of baptism. While this is true, true Christian faith will demand that all new Christians be baptized because Christ commanded it (Matthew 28:19).

We again need to be reminded of two great theological facts:

1. Saving faith is not an independent work of man but is called into existence by the Holy Spirit working through His gospel-word. God's action always precedes and empowers our response. God is always before us with His grace, thus, baptism has been called the sacrament of prevenient (coming before) grace. God's grace seeks us out long before we sinners even think of it. The Good Shepherd is seeking out His lost sheep. It is not the sheep who are searching out the shepherd. We can come to faith only if we are already surrounded by the sphere of grace. Faith only grows where God's grace and love has first made it possible.

2. Saving faith is not the pre-requisite for a valid baptism. Faith is, however, necessary for laying hold of that new life which God is offering in the baptism. Arthur Peipkorn said: "...it is possible to receive baptism, but not the benefit of baptism, without faith. From this follows not only that the fruit of baptism may be received later than the baptism itself but also that the benefit[[10]](#footnote-4) in baptism can be lost if the person rejects his faith and no longer makes use of his baptism."[[11]](#endnote-7)

In such a case where a parent brings a child to baptism but never returns to worship or participate in the life of the church with the child they place the child in dreadful spiritual danger. Some will say however, Proverbs 22:6 says, **6**  Train a child in the way he should go, and when he is old he will not turn from it. [[12]](#footnote-5) A baptism and no further discipleship is not “training a child in the way he should go”. The result is the child grows up without Christ and will unless brought to Christ be lost, (damned). Are there exceptions? Of course there are exceptions. I have seen two circumstances at Mt. Calvary where the children came without their parents to worship and to confirmation. The faith given them in a valid baptism was effective and beneficial. However, more often is the case where a baptized child who has no connection with the church, and no instruction in the word they will grow up with a completely non-Christian even anti-Christian world view. A valid baptism with no beneficial outcome is the result of such a situation. The promise of God is made null and void not because the word was powerless but because in part the parent rejected Christ and in part the child never grew up knowing the Lord.

Salvation Can Be Lost

People who are baptized are not eternally saved! People who are baptized including children are safe in Christ. But the scriptures warn of falling away. Baptism is thus not an elevator to heaven. St. Paul writing to Timothy speaks first of Timothy and then he speaks of two former brothers in Christ who had blasphemed.

**Hebrews 3: 12**  "See to it, brothers, that none of you has a sinful, unbelieving heart that turns away from the living God." [[13]](#footnote-6) and again in 1 Timothy,

**I Timothy 1:18**This charge I entrust to you, Timothy, my child, in accordance with the prophecies previously made about you, that by them you may wage the good warfare, **19**holding faith and a good conscience. By rejecting this, some have made shipwreck of their faith, **20**among whom are Hymenaeus and Alexander, whom I have handed over to Satan that they may learn not to blaspheme.” [[14]](#footnote-7)

The writer to the Hebrews speaks about those who have ‘turned away’ from the living God’ then Paul refers to two former brothers in Christ who ‘shipwrecked’ their faith. In both cases these baptized individuals turned away or had fallen away from Christ. Some would say they never truly believed in the first place, but that is a rationalization waiting for a reason. They confessed Christ, they believed. Remember, no one can confess Christ as Lord without the Holy Spirit (I Corinthians 12: 1-2); having tasted and shared in the Holy Spirit they denied the Lord Jesus Christ.

Further, the writer to the Hebrews states:

**6**Therefore let us leave the elementary doctrine of Christ and go on to maturity, not laying again a foundation of repentance from dead works and of faith toward God, **2**and of instruction about washings, the laying on of hands, the resurrection of the dead and eternal judgment. **3**And this we will do if God permits.

**4**For it is impossible, in the case of those who have once been enlightened, who have tasted the heavenly gift, and have shared in the Holy Spirit, **5**and have tasted the goodness of the word of God and the powers of the age to come, **6**and then have fallen away[[15]](#footnote-8), (for it is impossible) to restore them again to repentance, since they are crucifying once again the Son of God to their own harm and holding him up to contempt. [[16]](#footnote-9) See Hebrews 9:27 and Hebrews 10:24ff.

Impossible to restore in the context of being dead and facing the judgment of God. While there is life there is open. Hebrews 9:27, “**27**And just as it is appointed for man to die once, and after that comes judgment,[[17]](#footnote-10) - It is hard to come back often because of pride, but not impossible.

Consider Hebrews 10:24ff, **24**And let us consider how to stir up one another to love and good works, **25**not neglecting to meet together, as is the habit of some, but encouraging one another, and all the more as you see the Day drawing near. **26**For if we go on sinning deliberately after receiving the knowledge of the truth, there no longer remains a sacrifice for sins, **27**but a fearful expectation of judgment, and a fury of fire that will consume the adversaries. **28**Anyone who has set aside the law of Moses dies without mercy on the evidence of two or three witnesses. **29**How much worse punishment, do you think, will be deserved by the one who has trampled underfoot the Son of God, and has profaned the blood of the covenant by which he was sanctified, and has outraged the Spirit of grace? [[18]](#footnote-11)

 A valid and beneficial baptism can be illustrated by showing a baptismal font containing water. Picture two hands each holding a pearl over the font. The pearl represents forgiveness of sin and eternal life. One hand represents the hand of God putting the pearl over the font; the other hand represents faith which is taking the pearl of forgiveness to itself. Faith is and must be understood as a gift and work of God. Eph. 2:8-9 & Hebrews 10:27. The glory of God is that both hands are God's creative gift to the one baptized.

**The Necessity of Baptism**

 In Matthew 28:19 Christ says "all nations," that is, "all living human beings" should be baptized. There remains indications in the New Testament, especially in Acts (cf. Matt. 8:35-37), that the Spirit could be given independently of baptism in water. The twelve were given the Spirit directly (on Easter evening according to John 20:22; and at Pentecost according to Acts 2) and not through baptism in water. Acts 10:44 shows the Spirit coming upon Cornelius and company before they were baptized in water. Therefore, we do not baptize adults until we have seen some indication of the Spirit at work in their lives; that is why a thorough teaching (catechization) must precede baptism in the case of the young and older adults.

 The indication that the Spirit is at work in a person is in their confession of faith. At the end of catechetical instruction where the basics of the Christian faith are taught, a person who has indeed come to faith in Christ can from that new faith now fortified by the Word confess Jesus Christ as Lord and their Savior. (I Corinthians 12:3) The confession of faith is evidence that the Spirit was and is at work. A stray thought - Hunger grows for spiritual things including a hunger for the Lord’s Supper. Where there is no hunger for the sacrament of the Lord’s Supper there is a strong indication that that person is no longer a Christian.

 Back to baptism: Even though the Spirit could be given outside baptism, it does appear that all Christians in the first century church received a baptism in water. Even those who had already received the Spirit were baptized (cf. Acts 10:47-48). Likewise, Paul was baptized after his Damascus road conversion. The early Christians remembered John 3: **5**Jesus answered, “Truly, truly, I say to you, unless one is born of water and the Spirit, he cannot enter the kingdom of God.[[19]](#footnote-12) and Matthew 28:19, **19**Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, **20**teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you. [[20]](#footnote-13) so all were baptized. The Greek of Matthew 28:19 cannot be made to say, teach first and then baptize.

**When is a Person to be baptized?**

 Baptists, Pentecostals, Jehovah Witnesses and Mormons (although Jehovah Witnesses and Mormons are not Christian), Mennonites, Quakers, Seventh Day Adventists, even some liberal Roman Catholic theologians all say no to infant baptism.[[21]](#endnote-8)

 What do the scriptures say about baptizing infants? There is no explicit statement in the Bible that says "baptize infants". However, this silence should not be taken to mean that infants were not to be baptized. On the contrary, historical evidence leads us to assume that the church automatically would baptize infants. The scripture does not specifically say "baptize infants" because it wasn't a problem for the early church. Baptism of infants was as natural and expected as was the sun to rise in the east and set in the west.

 Knowing that Judaism baptized children one could surmise that Christians would also. The Apostles could not reach the children except through their parents. Having reached their parents (e.g. Acts 16:15. 33; I Cor. 1:16), they would follow the established Jewish custom of baptizing the children of proselytes.

**Acts 16:15**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.” And she prevailed upon us. [[22]](#footnote-14)

**Acts 16: 33**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. [[23]](#footnote-15)

**I Corinthians 1:16**(I (St. Paul) did baptize also the household of Stephanas. Beyond that, I do not know whether I baptized anyone else.) [[24]](#footnote-16)

 E. W. A. Koehler said, "Now, it is true, the question whether or not the baptism which Christ instituted should also be administered to children may not be determined by what the Jews did with the children of proselytes but must be answered from the words of institution (Christ's command). However, if it had been the intention of Christ to limit His baptism to adult people only, excluding infants, He should have forewarned His disciples, telling them very plainly that they should disciple or proselyte for Him only Adult persons. Whenever a custom is continued, nothing need be said: but if a radical change is made, then those who have grown up under the old custom must be told. It is therefore no point against infant baptism that in the command of Christ infants are not expressly mentioned; it was not necessary to mention what was commonly held among the people of Jesus' day."[[25]](#endnote-9)

 When churches object to infant baptism they say children can't understand or appreciate it. We stress that this sacrament is the only means God has given to the Church to save (that is to regenerate) little children and infants. If God has other ways to save them, He has not told us, so we must proceed on what we know rather than on what we do not know. We know God has commanded baptism and we know that baptism saves -- (I Peter 3:21) **“...and this water symbolizes baptism that now saves you also"**  so if we are going to err we are going to err in interpreting the Bible on the basis of what it says. Baptism saves and that is clear.

 What about faith? Is not faith necessary? Yes, faith comes to a child in the same way it comes to an adult, by hearing. Romans 10:17 says, **“Consequently, faith comes from hearing the message, and the message is heard through the word of Christ."** The word of Christ here refers to the Gospel, and it is in the hearing that the Holy Spirit converts the soul, not in the understanding as some churches claim. Baptism for the infant saves as they hear the Gospel of Jesus Christ. For further study, here are Bible verses which can be used to deduce the practice of infant baptism: Matthew 28:19, Acts 2:39, Acts 16:15, Acts 16:32, I Corinthians 1:16, however, let me highlight Colossians 2:11-12.

**Colossians 2:11 “**In him also you were circumcised with a circumcision made without hands, by putting off the body of the flesh, by the circumcision of Christ, (what is the circumcision of Christ? Baptism is the circumcision made without hands. Now listen carefully scripture says,) **12**having been buried with him in baptism, in which you were also raised with him through faith in the powerful working of God, who raised him from the dead. [[26]](#footnote-17)

**Church History and Infant Baptism**

 Edmund Schlick wrote, "In the history of the theology of baptism it is surprising how late and how sparsely theological arguments in favor of infant baptism appear in the documents. The conclusion is obvious that infant baptism was so self-evident and unproblematic that any justification of the practice was superfluous."[[27]](#endnote-10)

 As early as the fourth century, Tertullian[[28]](#endnote-11) warns against infant baptism and addresses the need to postpone some baptisms. This tells us infant baptisms were taking place regularly. His reasons were, however, fundamentally different than the reason most often presented against infant baptism today. Most arguments today circle around the issues of man's free will and man's reasoning, rather than simple belief in God's *command* and *promise*.

 Tertullian was addressing children born to non-believers and children of recent converts. It was the practice of the early church to baptize the entire family together at the Easter Vigil with the adults and the older children when they had completed instruction in the Word.

 The rejection of infant baptism in general did not occur until the 16th century. It is one of the most important characteristics of the Baptist movement which spread from Zurich and thereafter led to the early extermination of its leaders, and continued among the Mennonites and later, in quite a different way, in the Baptist bodies of today.[[29]](#endnote-12)

 Those who assert that infant baptism was not practiced in the first centuries of the Christian church and who assert there is absolutely no reference to infant baptism by the church fathers are grossly incorrect and they are lying. It only takes a few minutes at any reasonable library to find evidence to the contrary.

 Booklets like, "Baptismal Regeneration the Great Pagan Idol"[[30]](#endnote-13) make many such assertions without documentation. Such a work is without any validity, especially when such a work cannot stand up to historical and Biblical scrutiny.

 Suggesting that the teaching of the church on baptism as a sacrament originates in pagan religion, Peterson ignores the legitimacy of their baptism and the sufficiency of Christ's sacrifice.

 Schlink says on this subject, "No conclusions can be drawn from the initiation rites of the mystery cults because they did not involve infants."[[31]](#endnote-14) To suggest that infant baptism originates from paganism is to ignore and fabricate history. (Deconstructionism)

 Schlink, further says, "These passages (I Corinthians 1:16 and Acts 11:14, 16:15, 33:18:8)...concerning the baptism of entire households...do, however, make clear that the totality of the family is involved, and this in principle includes children, the slaves, and their children. But of course the texts do not say that there are children or, indeed, infants in the families mentioned by Paul and Luke."[[32]](#endnote-15)

**Infant Baptism[[33]](#footnote-18) -- Evidence in the Catacombs**

 Catacomb grave inscriptions state that children had been baptized, e.g. "Aristus lived eight months. He was recently baptized." And again, "Flavai Jovin lived 3 years and 32 days. She was recently baptized."[[34]](#endnote-16)

 Further evidence from children's tombstones report the occurrence of infant baptism in the first century was something that was not unique to the early period of the Christian inscriptions.

One of several examples follow: first the original Latin and then a translation.

 d (is) m (anibus) s (acrum)

 florentius filion sue Aproniano

 Fecit titulum benemerenti qui vixit

 annum et menses novem dies quinque

 qui cum soldu amatus fuisset a moiore

 sue et vidit hunc morti constitutum

 esse petivit de aeclesia ut fidelis de sculo recessisst[[35]](#endnote-17)

Translated this Latin passage says:

 Dedicated to the departed

 Florentius made this inscription for his worthy son Apronianus who

 lived one year and nine months and five days. As he was truly

 loved by his grandmother and she knew that his death was imminent,

 she asked the church that he might depart from the world as a believer.

 We have here a case in point of a private infant baptism in an emergency situation, which was administered to Apronianus in time and enabled him to die a believer (fidelis). The very fact that it was the grandmother, who urged that her darling should be baptized before his death, makes it in the highest degree probable that the father of the child, Florentius, was a pagan.

This connection is confirmed by the formula in the first line, strikingly pagan for a Christian catacomb inscription: Dis manibus sacrum. We have thus in the Apronianus inscription evidence before us for a missionary baptism administered to a twenty-one month old dying as a non-Christian infant.

 When we pray at the end of the baptism of a child or infant today, we thank God for extending His Church. Indeed, we are acknowledging that baptism does save as the scriptures clearly teach in I Peter 3:21.

**The Church Fathers**

 All the quotes from this point forward come from either the Anti-Niceane Fathers or the Post Niceane Fathers. Who and what are the Church Fathers? Like the fathers of our country we refer to men who have had a significant impact on the Church in its early years as Church Fathers. Anti-Niceane and Post-Niceane refer to the men who lived before (Anti-Niceane) the Council of Nicaea where they wrote the Niceane Creed (350 A.D.), or those who lived after that time as the Post Niceane period.

 These quotes give additional evidence that infant baptism is not something new but were in fact, the practice of the first century church.

**Justine Martyr**[[36]](#endnote-18) in his Apology, (defense of the Christian faith) in the 2nd century, writes; "Several persons, male and female, of sixty and seventy years, who were made disciples to Christ in their childhood do continue uncorrupted."

**Irenaeus**[[37]](#endnote-19) in his Adversus Haereses writes: "for He came to save all persons by Himself: all, I mean, who by Him are regenerated unto God, infants and little ones and children and youths and elder persons." Irenaeus specifically uses the word, regenerated, the same term used for Baptismal Regeneration today.

**Origen**[[38]](#endnote-20) in his comments on Romans during the 3rd Century writes: "For this also, it was that the church had from the Apostles a tradition to give baptism even to infants." Origen clearly states infant baptism comes from the Apostles' teaching.

As I said before, the baptism of infants was a given in the first century church; it was assumed. Not until changes in the practice of baptizing infants in place of circumcision at the 8th day did the necessity for the discussion and defense of infant baptism come about, which began about 200 A.D. The heresies concerning original sin, the person of Christ, and Gnosticism forced the debates about infant baptism.

**Augustine**[[39]](#endnote-21) of North Africa wrote in the 4th century that he never read or heard of anyone who accepted the Old and New Testaments reject infant baptism for it rests on apostolic authority.

 In the fourth century, when Christianity became the accepted state religion, infant baptism became the rule. With the exception of Tertullian, infant baptism was not challenged in any way until heretical groups arose in the 12th century (the documentation for 12th century opposition is spurious at best) and then again in the 16th century among the left wing radical Anabaptists (today Mennonites) and spiritualists of the day; namely Thomas Munser[[40]](#endnote-22) for one.

 There is more evidence from tombstone inscriptions to be added to those already cited and still more importantly the Scriptures themselves.

It is my hope that the reader will come to see the truth concerning the power of God at work in the gospel and through the Sacrament of Baptism which makes sinful people His people in particular infants, through baptismal regeneration. We must never limit what God can do by placing human reason above the power of the Gospel to convert and regenerate lost souls.

 My final thought: The Church of Christ can only continue to preach the Word of God with power and conviction and be relevant if it truly believes in, trusts in and submits to the authority of the Bible. Many churches preach a compromising Christ, making disciples by their means. If people are going to be saved they must be won, taught and discipled the Lord’s way and in His Word.

 Matthew records the clearest example of how the Lord Jesus prescribed to the church the method and means to make disciples,

 **Matthew 28:19-20: Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you. And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age."**

1. Time Magazine, May 31, 1968, p. 58 [↑](#endnote-ref-1)
2. The Gospel of Baptism, Rich Jungkuntz's, pp. 39-41. [↑](#endnote-ref-2)
3. Concordia Triglotta, Augsburg Confession, Article XIV, p. 49, Concordia

 Publishing House, St. Louis, MO, 1921. [↑](#endnote-ref-3)
4. The Lutheran Hymnal, p. 858, Concordia Publishing House, St. Louis, MO,

 1941. [↑](#endnote-ref-4)
5. Lutherans and Catholics in Dialogue, Vol. II, p. 10. [↑](#endnote-ref-5)
6. *The Holy Bible: English Standard Version*. (2001). (2 Co 1:21–22). Wheaton: Standard Bible Society. [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
7. *The Holy Bible: English Standard Version*. (2001). (Eph 1:12–14). Wheaton: Standard Bible Society. [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
8. *The Holy Bible: English Standard Version*. (2001). (Eph 4:30). Wheaton: Standard Bible Society. [↑](#footnote-ref-3)
9. Teaching Luther's Catechism, Girgenshohn, Vol. II, p. 10. [↑](#endnote-ref-6)
10. [↑](#footnote-ref-4)
11. Lutherans and Catholics in Dialogue, Arthur Carl Peipkorn, Vol II, pp. 50-55 [↑](#endnote-ref-7)
12. *The Holy Bible: New International Version*. (1984). (Pr 22:6). Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan. [↑](#footnote-ref-5)
13. *The Holy Bible: New International Version*. (1984). (Heb 3:12). Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan. [↑](#footnote-ref-6)
14. *The Holy Bible: English Standard Version*. (2001). (1 Ti 1:18–20). Wheaton: Standard Bible Society. [↑](#footnote-ref-7)
15. **παραπίπτω,** † **παράπτωμα-**“to be led somewhere or other,”- The sense “to be led past,” “to go astray,” “to be mistaken,” [↑](#footnote-ref-8)
16. *The Holy Bible: English Standard Version*. (2001). (Heb 6). Wheaton: Standard Bible Society. [↑](#footnote-ref-9)
17. *The Holy Bible: English Standard Version*. (2001). (Heb 9:27). Wheaton: Standard Bible Society. [↑](#footnote-ref-10)
18. *The Holy Bible: English Standard Version*. (2001). (Heb 10:24–29). Wheaton: Standard Bible Society. [↑](#footnote-ref-11)
19. *The Holy Bible: English Standard Version*. (2001). (Jn 3:5). Wheaton: Standard Bible Society. [↑](#footnote-ref-12)
20. *The Holy Bible: English Standard Version*. (2001). (Mt 28:18–20). Wheaton: Standard Bible Society. [↑](#footnote-ref-13)
21. Time Magazine, May 31,1968, p. 58. [↑](#endnote-ref-8)
22. *The Holy Bible: English Standard Version*. (2001). (Ac 16:15). Wheaton: Standard Bible Society. [↑](#footnote-ref-14)
23. *The Holy Bible: English Standard Version*. (2001). (Ac 16:33). Wheaton: Standard Bible Society. [↑](#footnote-ref-15)
24. *The Holy Bible: English Standard Version*. (2001). (1 Co 1:16). Wheaton: Standard Bible Society. [↑](#footnote-ref-16)
25. Concordia Theological Monthly, Vol. X, July, 1939, No. 7. [↑](#endnote-ref-9)
26. *The Holy Bible: English Standard Version*. (2001). (Col 2:11–12). Wheaton: Standard Bible Society. [↑](#footnote-ref-17)
27. The Doctrine of Baptism, Edmund Schlick, 1972, Concordia Publishing House, p. 137. [↑](#endnote-ref-10)
28. *Quintus Septimius Florens Tertullianus;* ca./ 155/160-ca. 220/230. Birth was

 probably Carthage, son of a pagan centurion; schooled in rhetoric and

 jurisprudence; Christian perhaps ca. 190/195; catechist (or teacher of the

 Christian faith) Carthage. Is considered one of the Church Fathers. [↑](#endnote-ref-11)
29. The Doctrine of Baptism, Edmund Schlick, 1972, Concordia Publishing House,

 p. 136 [↑](#endnote-ref-12)
30. Baptismal Regeneration The Great Pagan Idol, Rev. V.L. Peterson, 1349 Midway

 Parkway, St. Paul 13, Minnesota, 1947. [↑](#endnote-ref-13)
31. The Doctrine of Baptism, Edmund Schlick, 1972, Concordia Publishing House, p. 135. [↑](#endnote-ref-14)
32. Ibid, p. 135. [↑](#endnote-ref-15)
33. [↑](#footnote-ref-18)
34. The Library of Christian Doctrine, Infant Baptism in the First Four Centuries,

 Joahchim Jeremias, The Westminster Press. 1962, p. 41 [↑](#endnote-ref-16)
35. ILCV I 1343, F.J. Dolger, Ichthys II 524, Rome, Catacomb of Priscilla. [↑](#endnote-ref-17)
36. *Justin the Philosopher;* ca. 100--ca.165. Born Flavia Neapolis (Nablus; ancient

 Shechem) Samaria, of heathen parents; Platonist; converted ca. 130; established

 a Christian School at Rome. [↑](#endnote-ref-18)
37. *Irenaeus:* Died ca. 200 A.D. Greek Father; born probably at Smyrna (Modern

 Izmur). Asia Minor; saw and heard Polycarp; opposed Gnosticism and other

 heresies; worked zealously for the spread of Christianity and defense of its

 doctrines. [↑](#endnote-ref-19)
38. *Origen;* Ca. 185--ca. 254. Greek Church Father, born probably Alexandria,

 Egypt, of Christian parents; taught school and instructed catechumens in

 Alexandria 202 A.D. [↑](#endnote-ref-20)
39. *Augustine of Hippo,* (354-430). One of the greatest of the Church Fathers and one

 of the outstanding figures of all ages. Born Tagaste, died Hippo, both in Africa.

 His father, Patricius, though a member of the council of his hometown, was not

 esp. distinguished for either learning or wealth and remained hostile to the

 Christian church, till shortly before his death in 371, when he was baptized.

 His mother Monica was a consecrated woman, whose Christian virtues he

 praised in his writings. In the spring 387, Augustine was baptized. he was a

 pastor till death, the bishop and leading theologian for more than 30 years of

 African Christianity. [↑](#endnote-ref-21)
40. *Munzer;* ca. 1489/91-1525, German Enthusiast; born Stolberg, Saxony; educated

 Leipzig and Frankfurt and der Oder; preacher Zwickau 1520; tried to surpass

 Martin Luther as reformer; fanatical ascetic and Anabaptist; built religion on

 direct revelation; claimed enlightenment by inner light through visions, dreams,

 thus denying infant baptism, the Lord's Supper, and placing the Bible below

 human reason and direct revelation, etc.; leader in Peasants' War; defeated at

 Frankenhausen; beheaded.

Other Notes:

Patristic (Church Fathers) Testimony to the Scriptural Doctrine and Practice of Baptizing Infants into the Christian Faith and Church

**Irenaeus**

"He [Jesus] came to save all through himself; all, I say, who through him are reborn in God: infants, and children, and youths, and old men. Therefore he passed through every age, becoming an infant for infants, sanctifying infants; a child for children, sanctifying those who are of that age . . . [so that] he might be the perfect teacher in all things, perfect not only in respect to the setting forth of truth, perfect also in respect to relative age" (Against Heresies 2:22:4 [A.D. 189]).

"And [Naaman] dipped himself . . . seven times in the Jordan [2 Kgs. 5:14]. It was not for nothing that Naaman of old, when suffering from leprosy, was purified upon his being baptized, but [this served] as an indication to us. For as we are lepers in sin, we are made clean, by means of the sacred water and the invocation of the Lord, from our old transgressions, being spiritually regenerated as newborn babes, even as the Lord has declared: Except a man be born again through water and the Spirit, he shall not enter into the kingdom of heaven [John 3:5]" (Fragment 34 [A.D. 190]).

**Hippolytus**

"Baptize first the children, and if they can speak for themselves let them do so. Otherwise, let their parents or other relatives speak for them" (The Apostolic Tradition 21:16 [A.D. 215]).

**Origen**

"Every soul that is born into flesh is soiled by the filth of wickedness and sin. . . . In the Church, baptism is given for the remission of sins, and, according to the usage of the Church, baptism is given even to infants. If there were nothing in infants which required the remission of sins and nothing in them pertinent to forgiveness, the grace of baptism would seem superfluous" (Homilies on Leviticus 8:3 [A.D. 248]).

"The Church received from the apostles the tradition of giving baptism even to infants. The apostles, to whom were committed the secrets of the divine sacraments, knew there are in everyone innate strains of [original] sin, which must be washed away through water and the Spirit" (Commentaries on Romans 5:9 [A.D. 248]).

**Cyprian of Carthage**

"As to what pertains to the case of infants: You [Fidus] said that they ought not to be baptized within the second or third day after their birth, that the old law of circumcision must be taken into consideration, and that you did not think that one should be baptized and sanctified within the eighth day after his birth. In our council it seemed to us far otherwise. No one agreed to the course which you thought should be taken. Rather, we all judge that the mercy and grace of God ought to be denied to no man born" (Letters 64:2 [A.D. 253]).

"If, in the case of the worst sinners and those who formerly sinned much against God, when afterwards they believe, the remission of their sins is granted and no one is held back from baptism and grace, how much more, then, should an infant not be held back, who, having but recently been born, has done no sin, except that, born of the flesh according to Adam, he has contracted the contagion of that old death from his first being born. For this very reason does he [an infant] approach more easily to receive the
remission of sins: because the sins forgiven him are not his own but those of another" (ibid., 64:5).

**Gregory of Nazianz**

"Do you have an infant child? Allow sin no opportunity; rather, let the infant be sanctified from childhood. From his most tender age let him be consecrated by the Spirit. Do you fear the seal [of baptism] because of the weakness of nature? Oh, what a pusillanimous mother and of how little faith!" (Oration on Holy Baptism 40:7 [A.D. 388]).

"Well enough, some will say, for those who ask for baptism, but what do you have to say about those who are still children, and aware neither of loss nor of grace? Shall we baptize them too? Certainly [I respond], if there is any pressing danger. Better that they be sanctified unaware, than that they depart unsealed and uninitiated" (ibid., 40:28).

**John Chrysostom**

"You see how many are the benefits of baptism, and some think its heavenly grace consists only in the remission of sins, but we have enumerated ten honors [it bestows]! For this reason we baptize even infants, though they are not defiled by [personal] sins, so that there may be given to them holiness, righteousness, adoption, inheritance, brotherhood with Christ, and that they may be his [Christs] members" (Baptismal Catecheses in Augustine, Against Julian 1:6:21 [A.D. 388]).

**Augustine**
"What the universal Church holds, not as instituted [invented] by councils but as something always held, is most correctly believed to have been handed down by apostolic authority. Since others respond for children, so that the celebration of the sacrament may be complete for them, it is certainly availing to them for their consecration, because they themselves are not able to respond" (On Baptism, Against the Donatists 4:24:31 [A.D. 400]).

"The custom of Mother Church in baptizing infants is certainly not to be scorned, nor is it to be regarded in any way as superfluous, nor is it to be believed that its tradition is anything except apostolic" (The Literal Interpretation of Genesis 10:23:39 [A.D. 408]).

"Cyprian was not issuing a new decree but was keeping to the most solid belief of the Church in order to correct some who thought that infants ought not be baptized before the eighth day after their birth. . . . He agreed with certain of his fellow bishops that a child is able to be duly baptized as soon as he is born" (Letters 166:8:23 [A.D. 412]).

"By this grace baptized infants too are ingrafted into his [Christs] body, infants who certainly are not yet able to imitate anyone. Christ, in whom all are made alive . . . gives also the most hidden grace of his Spirit to believers, grace which he secretly infuses even into infants. . . . It is an excellent thing that the Punic [North African] Christians call baptism salvation and the sacrament of Christs Body nothing else than life. Whence does this derive, except from an ancient and, as I suppose, apostolic tradition, by which the churches of Christ hold inherently that without baptism and participation at the table of the Lord it is impossible for any
man to attain either to the kingdom of God or to salvation and life eternal? This is the witness of Scripture, too. . . . If anyone wonders why children born of the baptized should themselves be baptized, let him attend briefly to this. . . . The sacrament of baptism is most assuredly the sacrament of regeneration" (Forgiveness and the Just Deserts of Sin, and the Baptism of Infants 1:9:10; 1:24:34; 2:27:43 [A.D. 412]).

**Council of Carthage V**

"Item: It seemed good that whenever there were not found reliable witnesses who could testify that without any doubt they [abandoned children] were baptized and when the children themselves were not, on account of their tender age, able to answer concerning the giving of the sacraments to them, all such children should be baptized without scruple, lest a hesitation should deprive them of the cleansing of the sacraments. This was urged by the [North African] legates, our brethren, since they redeem many such [abandoned children] from the barbarians" (Canon 7 [A.D. 401]).

**Council of Mileum II**

"[W]hoever says that infants fresh from their mothers wombs ought not to be baptized, or say that they are indeed baptized unto the remission of sins, but that they draw nothing of the original sin of Adam, which is expiated in the bath of regeneration . . . let him be anathema [excommunicated]. Since what the apostle [Paul] says, Through one man sin entered into the world, and death through sin, and so passed to all men, in whom all have sinned [Rom. 5:12], must not be understood otherwise than the catholic church spread everywhere has always understood it. For on account of this rule of faith even infants, who in themselves thus far have not been able to commit any sin, are therefore truly baptized unto the remission of sins, so that that which they have contracted from generation may be cleansed in them by regeneration" (Canon 3 [A.D. 416]).

From Luther’s Small Catechism with Explanation

*What benefits does Baptism give?*

It works forgiveness of sins, rescues from death and the devil, and gives eternal salvation to all who believe this, as the words and promises of God declare.

*Which are these words and promises of God?*

Christ our Lord says in the last chapter of Mark: “Whoever believes and is baptized will be saved, but whoever does not believe will be condemned.” [**Mark 16:16**]

 **248. What great and precious things are given in Baptism?**

Baptism

A. works forgiveness of sins;

 846 **Acts 2:38** Repent and be baptized, every one of you, in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins.

 847 **Acts 22:16** Get up, be baptized and wash your sins away.

B. rescues from death and the devil;

 848 **Rom. 6:3, 5** Don’t you know that all of us who were baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into His death? … If we have been united with Him like this in His death, we will certainly also be united with Him in His resurrection.

 849 **Gal. 3:27** All of you who were baptized into Christ have clothed yourselves with Christ.

 850 **Col. 1:13–14** He has rescued us from the dominion of darkness and brought us into the kingdom of the Son He loves, in whom we have redemption, the forgiveness of sins. (Compare **Col. 2:11–12**.)

C. gives eternal salvation.

 851 **Mark 16:16** Whoever believes and is baptized will be saved.

 852 **1 Peter 3:21** This water [of Noah’s flood] symbolizes baptism that now saves you also.… It saves you by the resurrection of Jesus Christ.

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

**249. If Christ has already won forgiveness and salvation for us and gives us all this by grace alone, why do we still need Baptism?**

Christ has indeed won full forgiveness and salvation for the whole human race with His perfect life, suffering, death, and resurrection. He distributes this same forgiveness in Baptism. (Baptism is a means of grace.)

 854 **1 Cor. 6:11** You were washed, you were sanctified, you were justified in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ and by the Spirit of our God.

 855 **Titus 3:5–7** He saved us through the washing of rebirth and renewal by the Holy Spirit, whom He poured out on us generously through Jesus Christ our Savior, so that, having been justified by His grace, we might become heirs having the hope of eternal life.

**250. To whom does Baptism give all these blessings?**

Baptism gives these blessings to all who believe God’s saving promises.

 856 **Mark 16:16** Whoever believes and is baptized will be saved, but whoever does not believe will be condemned.

**251. Is it possible for an unbaptized person to be saved?**

It is only unbelief that condemns. Faith cannot exist in the heart of a person who despises and rejects Baptism against better knowledge. But those who believe the Gospel, yet die before they have opportunity to be baptized are not condemned.

 857 **Mark 16:16** Whoever does not believe will be condemned.

*Bible narratives:* The Pharisees and experts in the Law in unbelief rejected John’s baptism **(Luke 7:30).** The thief on the cross was saved without Baptism **(Luke 23:39–43).**

**252. Why are we not to seek a “baptism with the Holy Spirit” in addition to the Sacrament of Holy Baptism?**

Beyond sacramental Baptism we are to seek no other “baptism” because

A. there is no other God-given Baptism today beside the Sacrament of Holy Baptism;

 858 **Eph. 4:5** One Lord, one faith, one baptism.

*Note:* The “instruction about baptisms” (**Heb. 6:2**) does not mean that there are several Christian baptisms, but that the one true Baptism must be clearly distinguished from the many religious washings which were common in the ancient world (see for instance **Mark 7:4**).

B. the sacrament is not a water-only or a Spirit-only baptism, but a water-and-Spirit Baptism;

 859 **John 3:5** No one can enter the kingdom of God unless he is born of water and the Spirit.

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

*Note:* **Matt. 3:11** speaks of baptizing “with water” and “with the Holy Spirit and with fire.” The difference here is not between sacramental Baptism and some sort of “Spirit baptism,” but between the preparatory mission and baptism of John the Baptist and the full, permanent mission and Baptism of Jesus Christ. While John’s baptism also gave the forgiveness of sins, it was different in that it pointed forward to the redemptive work of the Savior.

C. the special signs granted by the Holy Spirit were not another “baptism,” but they proved the truth and power of the apostles’ preaching.

 861 **Acts 19:6** When Paul placed his hands on them, the Holy Spirit came on them and they spoke in tongues and prophesied.

 862 **2 Cor. 12:12** The things that mark an apostle—signs, wonders and miracles—were done among you with great perseverance.

**Why the True Universal Faith Teaches Infant Baptism**

Matthew 28:18—20 **Then Jesus came to them and said, “All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me.  Therefore, go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you.  And surely I will be with you always, to the very end of the age.”**  Notice that we make disciples by baptizing.

1 Peter 3:21 **And this water symbolizes Baptism that now saves you also—not the removal of dirt from the body but the pledge of a good conscience toward God.  It saves you by the resurrection of Jesus Christ.**  Baptism saves us.

Ephesians 2:8—10 **For it is by grace you have been saved, through faith--and this not from yourselves, it is the gift of God-- not by works, so that no one can boast.  For we are God's workmanship, created in Christ Jesus to do good works, which God prepared in advance for us to do.**  Even our faith is a gift from God.  It is not based on our decision or experience, but on God’s workmanship.  We are God’s creation in Christ Jesus; therefore the pledge spoken of in 1 Peter 3: 21 is not a pledge we make to God, it is a pledge that God makes to us.  Otherwise our salvation would be a work we do, and not grace.

John 3:5 **Jesus answered, "I tell you the truth, no one can enter the kingdom of God unless he is born of water and the Spirit.**  Unless we are baptized with water, we cannot enter the Kingdom of God, just like Jesus said, “**He who believes and is baptized shall be saved**” (Mark 16: 16).

Some will argue from this that a person must believe before he can be baptized, but the passage does not indicate a relationship of time.  Also, if we must believe before we can be baptized, then Baptism would not save us and Saint Peter lied.  Since we know that there is no salvation apart from belief (faith) in Christ (John 3: 36), Baptism itself must create faith, or it again could not save us.

For those who continue to argue against infant Baptism, we point out that infants were circumcised in ancient times when they were eight days old.  Circumcision gave them salvation because it placed them under the covenant.  Infants are also part of all nations, and all nations are to be baptized (see Matthew 28: 18—20 above).  If it is true that infants were not considered part of all nations when Christ gave the command, then women also must not be baptized, because only men were numbered in those days.

In the same way, children are part of the entire households that were baptized, and are the recipients of the promise spoken in Acts 2:38, 39 **Peter replied, "Repent and be baptized, every one of you, in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins.  And you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit.  The promise is for you and your children and for all who are far off—for all whom the Lord our God will call."** Baptism forgives sins.  In this passage we also see that Baptism is for those whom God calls, not those who have decided they will follow God, accepted Christ, or prayed a certain prayer.

Against those who protest that a child is innocent, or that it cannot believe because faith is an act of conscious will, we say, “They are mislead.”  By Jesus’ words, **“Let the little children** (infants) **come to me, and do not hinder them, for the kingdom of God belongs to such as these,”** (Mark 10: 14), we see that children are sinful, or they would not need to come to Christ; they would already be with Him.  This is in complete agreement with Psalm 51: 5 “**Surely I have been a sinner from birth, sinful from the time my mother conceived me,”** and the many places in Scripture that state to the effect: “**All have sinned and fallen short of the glory of God**” (Romans 3: 23).  Children are sinful from conception.  They have sinned and fallen short of the glory of God.  But we also see that infants are able to believe or they could not come to Jesus.  Since infants are not capable of verbal comprehension, they are normally brought to faith through the great mystery of Baptism, which has the power to save because it forgives sins (see 1 Peter 3:21 and Acts 2: 38 above).

To those who claim that they do not make faith a work of man, nor slander Holy Baptism, but will not baptize infants, we say: “It is only those who deny the power of Baptism, which God Himself claims it has, that will not baptize infants.”  They deny its power because they believe that Baptism is a public confession of faith that we make before God and man, rather than something God does for us to save us.  On the other hand, those who understand the great power of Baptism are not concerned about the form (immersion, sprinkling, pouring, or washing) that is used in baptizing.  Again it is those who make Baptism a work of man, who insist on a particular form.

Even the act of Baptism shows that it is God’s work and not man’s, since we do not baptize ourselves, but are baptized by the hand of a Christian.  Christ Jesus our Savior said, “**If you hold to my teaching, you are really my disciples**” (John 8: 23); Baptism is one of the most basic teachings of our Lord.  It was commanded by Him just before He ascended to heaven.  His teaching is that Baptism forgives sins and saves us.

Infant Baptism has always been the practice of the Church until the time of the Reformation.  However, in the Reformation, the Lutheran Church held to the true, universal, and scriptural practice of infant Baptism.  Other churches did not.  The only time in history prior to the reformation that infant Baptism was not practiced, and then only by some, was around the fourth century.  At that time a false teaching was promoted saying that Baptism forgave only the sins committed before Baptism, rather than all sins even after Baptism.  Therefore some people put off Baptism until the moment of death so that they would not later sin and negate the great benefit of Baptism (according to their misguided thought).  Not only was this a false understanding, it was a dangerous practice because a person might die suddenly.  The people who held to this false teaching did not say that infant Baptism was wrong; they simply misunderstood that Baptism forgives all sins—even those later in life.

Contrary to this false understanding we have the voice of some very early church fathers (100-200 A.D.—students of the Apostles) who wrote that they were baptized as infants.  They understood and taught this as the correct, normal Biblical practice.

If there is still any question whether it is proper to baptize infants, the Holy Christian Church will always do what is safe for salvation.  We know that no harm is done if a person is baptized as an infant when he should not have been.  On the other hand there can be great harm done if one should have been baptized, and was not.

***Lord have mercy on our understanding.  Help us to be Your disciples by holding to your teaching.  Amen.*** [↑](#endnote-ref-22)