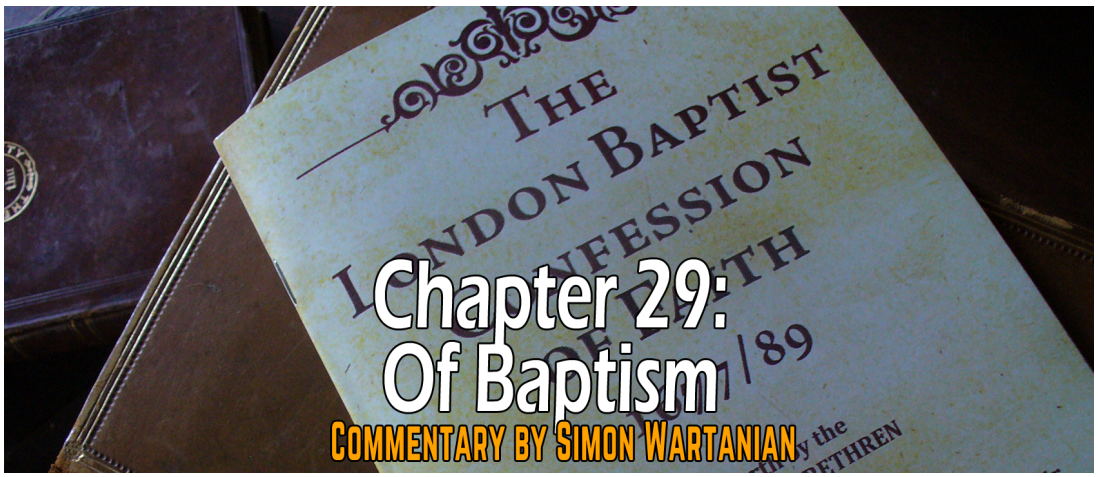
1689 Baptist Confession Chapter 29: Of Baptism - Commentary

Published: Friday 6th of March 2015 23:14 by Simon Wartanian
URL: https://www.thecalvinist.net/post/1689-Baptist-Confession-Chapter-29:-Of-Baptism-Commentary



Chapter 29: Of Baptism

What is baptism? What does it symbolize? Can I be saved without being baptized? Are professing believers alone to be baptized? What about infant baptism? What is the baptismal formula? How is baptism to be performed? Is it by sprinkling, pouring, or immersion?

Let me start with a personal testimony. I was born in Iraq to an Armenian (not Arm*i*nian) family. The church of the Armenian people is the Armenian Apostolic Church, which is an Orthodox church and it is very much similar to Roman Catholicism. Infants would be baptized around 40 days old or something around that time. That was not different in my case. Throughout my youth, I saw my infant baptism as the basis that I was a Christian. What made it also difficult was the fact that in Iraq, everyone would have their religion on their ID card. I even served as an altar boy in the church when I was little. But to be honest, I did not know the gospel, yet I was not ashamed to proclaim that I am Christian, but don't ask me what the gospel is! Thus, throughout my youth, I saw my baptism as the ground that I am a Christian, even though I did not pray often or did not know why Christ died. The Armenian Church, by the way, believes in baptismal regeneration and baptism by dipping the infant thrice in a bowl of holy water. My family came to the Netherlands in 2008 and I finally knew what freedom was, but not the freedom of the gospel (yet). Two years or so after that, I met with an old friend and stayed with him for a few days. He saw that I did not pray before bed, so he questioned me. He told me about prayer and how proper is it to pray to God and thank Him for everything. I told him that I don't want to be religious. He directed me to videos and episodes of **Zakaria Botros** (Arabic) who shares the gospel with Muslims via TV and exposes Islam. Through his videos and episodes, I came to know the true gospel and was saved by God's grace. After that, there grew in me a desire to study His Word, so I bought Bibles and study Bibles and started reading the Scriptures daily. Around that time, I started attending a Baptist church. I did not know that it was a Baptist church. We went there with some friends of mine and by God's grace, kept attending church on the Lord's Day.

I started reading the Bible and I could not find anything about the baptism of infants or that baptism as the basis of my faith and all the things which I had simply assumed in my youth. So I set out to study this matter and came to the conclusion that infant baptism was unscriptural and what happened to me as an infant, was not biblical baptism. On a Saturday night, I fell on my knees and asked the Lord if He wanted me to be baptized that He would give me some sign. The next day, the Lord's Day, the preacher talked about discipleship and following Christ no matter what and he said something like, "It doesn't matter what your family will think of you if you want to be baptized", which I saw as a sign from heaven. My family would not have been happy about my baptism because they think that my baptism as an infant was valid. Moreover, the Armenian Church is a national church. It does not get new converts, for example. Most infants are baptized and declared Christian, even if they know not the gospel. Therefore, the only baptism that is practiced and that I have heard of is infant baptism.

I still feel guilty for asking the Lord for a sign when I had already concluded that believers' baptism is the biblical position and that infant baptism was unscriptural. His Word was clear on this subject. So, after that service, I directly went to one of the elders and told him that I want to be baptized. After giving my testimony, I was **baptized on 16-06-2013**.

It is not my purpose in this chapter to overthrow the paedobaptist position by directly arguing against it, but by presenting a positive case for credobaptism—baptism upon the profession of faith. No doubt, we would have to touch upon some arguments or texts which our paedobaptist brethren like to use. But mainly, this is meant to be a positive case of what we (Reformed) Baptists believe.

---

§1 What Baptism Is And Is Not

1. Baptism is an ordinance of the New Testament, ordained by Jesus Christ, to be unto the party baptized, **a sign of his fellowship with him,** in his **death** and **resurrection**; of his being **engrafted into him;** **1** of **remission of sins;** **2** and of giving up into God, through Jesus Christ, to **live and walk in newness of life.** **3**
    1. Rom. 6:3-5; Col. 2:12; Gal. 3:27[1]
    2. Mark 1:4; Acts 22:16
    3. Rom. 6:4

Baptism is an ordinance of "positive and sovereign institution" (**chapter 28:1**) and it is an ordinance **of the New Testament**. Baptism is **a sign of…fellowship** (e.g., Gal. 3:27) and union with Christ for **the party baptized**. Baptism is a sign, i.e., something visible representing something invisible (union with Christ). Baptism signifies our **fellowship with Him, in His death and resurrection** (Rom. 6:3-5). As we are submerged in the water, we picture the Lord's death and ours. As we come out of the water, we picture the Lord's resurrection and ours. Baptism signifies our union with Christ or as it is here called, our **being engrafted into Him** (Gal. 3:27; see **chapter 27**). It signifies the washing away or **remission of sins** (Acts 22:16). It also signifies our **giving up into God** or our determination to submit to God, **through Jesus Christ** and **to live and walk in newness of life** (Rom. 6:4), which we have received from the Lord and which baptism pictures. Notice that baptism is called **a sign** and not the cause or an instrument of fellowship with Christ. It does not cause those things enlisted, but pictures these realities visibly. Which brings us to the subjects of Christian Baptism in the next paragraph.

That baptism is an institution and ordinance of our Lord is very clear from Matthew 28:18-20. There, we are given the command to make disciples of all nations by baptizing and teaching them. It is a given for Christians that it is Christ Who instituted it for all believers just like He did the Lord's Supper. But what is baptism actually? According to the Confession, it is a sign. Being a sign means that it points beyond itself to something else and this something is the work of Christ on behalf of believers. Baptism has a mode in which it is to be performed and also specific subjects who should be its recipient. Hercules Collins in 1691 defined baptism as "an external washing, plunging or dipping a profest Believer, in the Name of the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost."[2] As the previous chapter explained, baptism is a "positive and sovereign institution". This means that it is dictated by the will and directions of the Institutor. We dare not play around with it, add or take things from what He has commanded. We should be terrified if we neglect anything which He has commanded concerning this ordinance, or add to His ordinance. We dare not rest our case upon consequences, analogies, or even church history. The Sovereign Institutor has spoken His mind in the Holy Scriptures. Benjamin Keach, therefore, observed that "because Baptism (as well as Circumcision was) is a mere positive Law, and wholly depends on the Will and Pleasure of the Law-giver"[3].

Therefore, it is also our purpose to approach this subject asking what our Master says concerning it in His inerrant, sufficient, and infallible Word.

What Baptism Signifies

> Christian Baptism is the immersion of a believer in water, in token of his previous entrance into the communion of Christ's death and resurrection,—or, in other words, in token of his regeneration through union with Christ.[4]

Baptism signifies the new life and the blessings thereof, which the believer has received through faith and repentance. The Confession describes it as "a sign of fellowship with" Christ. Baptism shows our union with Christ, just as He Himself was baptized, so we share in a baptism similar to His and follow His example. Stanford E. Murrell defines baptism as "an ordinance wherein the washing with water, in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost, signifies and seals the engrafting of a soul into Christ, and the partaking of the benefits of the covenant of grace and our pledge to be the Lord's."[5]

We will look at the different aspects of baptism as presented in the New Testament below.

Union With Christ In Death, Resurrection, Newness Of Life

Galatians 3:27

> Gal. 3:25-27 But now that faith has come, we are no longer under a guardian, 26 for in Christ Jesus you are all sons of God, through faith. 27 For as many of you as were **baptized into Christ** **have put on Christ.**

We are children of God, why? Because we have been baptized into Christ. What does this mean? It means that we identify with Christ and we declare that we belong to Him. What is the meaning of "have put on Christ"? This means that we "have put on his sentiments, opinions, characteristic traits"[6] (cf. Rom. 13:14). We are identifying with Him and saying to those watching that we belong to Him. To Paul's argument, this then would mean that all who are baptized into Christ are children of God because they have put on His characteristics. They identify with Him. Jamieson, Fausset, Brown give the input of Paul's argument well when they write: "By baptism ye have put on Christ; therefore, He being the Son of God, ye become sons by adoption, by virtue of His Sonship by generation. God regards us in Him, as bearing Christ's name and character, rather than our own."[7] These are realities which baptism *signifies*, but are not *caused* by water baptism. The baptism *into Christ* is not the same as water baptism *in the name of Christ*. But we will see why that is the case below in our discussions on Romans 6 and Colossians 2.

Romans 6:3-5

> Rom. 6:3-5 Do you not know that all of us who have been **baptized into Christ** Jesus were **baptized into his death**? 4 We were **buried therefore with him by baptism into death**, in order that, just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, we too might **walk in newness of life**. 5 For if we have been united with him in a death like his, we shall certainly be united with him in a resurrection like his.

This is the most familiar aspect of baptism amongst Baptists. Baptism symbolizes our death to the old life and our resurrection to the new life in Christ Jesus our Lord. This is even more strengthened when we understand the mode of baptism to be immersion. The whole body goes into the water, symbolizing the death of our old self and identification with Christ's death, and then we come out of the water, symbolizing the resurrection of the new man in Christ and with Christ. It is a given fact, the apostle assumes, that baptism into Christ, which means to be engrafted in Him and united with Him, of which water baptism is a *sign* or *representation*, is a baptism into Christ's death. This means that in our baptism we are identifying with Christ's death. Baptism symbolizes the laying down of the old life with Christ and being united with Him in His death. Paul says elsewhere, "I have been crucified with Christ" (Gal. 2:20). As Thomas Patient observed, "the believer is to have fellowship with Christ in His Death *and* to reckon himself dead with Him to Sin, Satan, the Law, and the Curse (Gal. 3:27; Rom. 6:2, 3, 4, 7, 9; 1 Cor. 15:29)."[8] This is symbolized by water baptism when the person being baptized is immersed and is underwater. This signifies the person's death to his old self, even that the waters of baptism are seen as a grave for the old man. Dr. Wayne Grudem observes:

> In fact, the waters of baptism have an even richer symbolism than simply the symbolism of the grave. The waters also remind us of the waters of God's judgment that came upon unbelievers at the time of the flood (Gen. 7:6–24), or the drowning of the Egyptians in the Exodus (Ex. 14:26–29). Similarly, when Jonah was thrown into the deep (Jonah 1:7–16), he was thrown down to the place of death because of God's judgment on his disobedience—even though he was miraculously rescued and thus became a sign of the resurrection. Therefore those who go down into the waters of baptism really are going down into the waters of judgment and death, death that they deserve from God for their sins. When they come back up out of the waters of baptism it shows that they have come safely through God's judgment only because of the merits of Jesus Christ, with whom they are united in his death and resurrection. This is why Peter can say in 1 Peter 3:21 that baptism "corresponds to" the saving of Noah and his family from the waters of judgment in the flood.[9]

Paul identifies the waters of baptism with the burial of Christ. The burial of Christ showed that his body was truly dead, so also, we being identified with the burial of Christ shows that our old self is truly dead and thus we should live free from the dominion of sin (Rom. 6:6, etc.). But our going under the waters of baptism and of God's judgment is not in order that we may die and be condemned. Rather, the reason, as the apostle gives it, is that we may come out of the water in newness of life, just like the Lord Christ did. The Lord Christ did not die and was buried to remain dead and buried, but that He may obtain eternal redemption for His people by His death and resurrection and enter into His rest. So, in like manner, the believer goes into the water-grave but comes out of the waters of baptism in newness of life. His old self remains in the waters of God's judgment, and a new person emerges. The going into the waters of baptism identifies us with Christ's death. As John Gill observed on Romans 6:4, "for believers, whilst under water, are as persons buried, and so dead; which signifies not only their being dead with Christ, and their communion with him in his death, but also their being dead to sin by the grace of Christ, and therefore ought not to live in it: for the apostle is still pursuing his argument, and is showing, from the

nature, use, and end of baptism, that believers are dead to sin, and therefore cannot, and ought not, to live in it; as more fully appears from the end of baptism next mentioned"[10].

Paul here is not teaching that baptism is the vehicle that brings regeneration and the new life, for that is contradicted by everything he laid down in the previous chapters about how justification is by faith and grace alone. Rather, baptism is that which *signifies* and *symbolizes* the truths of justification and regeneration. Moreover, we should remember the fact that in the early church, the believers did not wait a long time or wait at all for their baptism after faith. Therefore, baptism came to be identified with the beginning of the new life. People did not wait months and years to be baptized, as most of us do, but as with the three thousand on Pentecost and the Ethiopian eunuch, they were baptized immediately after believing in Christ. They did not receive regeneration, faith, or justification by water baptism, but they showed that they possessed these things by water baptism. All these truths are clearly represented and symbolized in water baptism by immersion. But, is the apostle actually speaking of water baptism here? Dr. John MacArthur calls the baptism in Romans 6 a "dry baptism" in **a sermon** of his. This baptism which Paul is writing about is a spiritual baptism *into* Christ. Baptism symbolizes our union with Christ but it is not the means which brings our union with Him. To claim so would make salvation to be dependent upon baptism and reject what the apostle had laid before this chapter about justification by faith alone. The baptism of Romans 6 is a metaphorical baptism into Christ at the moment of faith, when the believer is united to their Savior and experiences the blessings of this union. But does this overthrow everything that I've said above? Not for a bit! The truths of union with Christ in His death and resurrection are still *represented* and *shown* by baptism in water, but they are not the effects of water baptism. If baptism was the means of union with Christ, i.e., salvation, then that would mean that salvation is by faith and works, which is contrary to the foundation which the apostle had laid in chapters 3-5. Although I deny that this passage is directly speaking of water baptism, yet, I believe that Paul *had* water baptism in mind because it was a sign given by the Lord to symbolize our union in His death, burial, and resurrection. Therefore, its use for the meaning and *mode* of baptism is proper. Although the baptism here is spiritual baptism, yet it cannot be denied that water baptism signifies spiritual baptism, i.e., regeneration.

A.H. Strong makes the following observation on the significance of Christian baptism:

> Baptism, like the Fourth of July, the Passover, the Lord's Supper, is a historical monument. It witnesses to the world that Jesus died and rose again. In celebrating it, we show forth the Lord's death as truly as in the celebration of the Supper. But it is more than a historical monument. It is also a pictorial expression of doctrine. Into it are woven all the essential truths of the Christian scheme. It tells of the nature and penalty of sin, of human nature delivered from sin in the person of a crucified and risen Savior, of salvation secured for each human soul that is united to Christ, of obedience to Christ as the way to life and glory. Thus baptism stands from age to age as a witness for God—a witness both to the facts and to the doctrine of Christianity. To change the form of administering the ordinance is therefore to strike a blow at Christianity and at Christ, and to defraud the world of a part of God's means of salvation.[11]

Colossians 2:11-12

Another passage which is quite similar to Romans 6:3-5 is Colossians 2:11-12:

> 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, 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.

The elect were united with Christ in His death and they were buried with their Covenantal Head, but also raised together with Him. In contrast to Jewish circumcision of the flesh, Christians still have a circumcision, namely, that of the heart (Deut. 10:16; 30:6; Jer. 4:4; Rom. 2:28-29; Phil. 3:3). Circumcision continues in the New Covenant, yet it is not of the flesh but of the heart, which is regeneration. This passage is often claimed by our paedobaptist brethren to teach that the sign or seal of the New Covenant is baptism because they see a connection here between circumcision of the foreskin and Christian baptism. But I believe that Paul has another counterpart to the Old Covenant circumcision. The language of circumcision stays the same, but the object of circumcision and its spiritual significance are changed in the New Covenant. The sign of the Old Covenant was circumcision of the males, but in the New Covenant, there is a "circumcision made without hands" by Christ for every member of the New Covenant, male and female. The apostle is not equating circumcision and baptism here, but circumcision of the flesh and circumcision of the *heart*. In the Old Covenant, anyone who did not have the sign thereof did not belong to the covenant. In the New Covenant, anyone who is not circumcised in heart (which is *not* a sign of the New Covenant, because a sign has to be visible, see below on **Signs And Seal**), does not belong to the New Covenant. Circumcision functions as the prerequisite for membership in both covenants. Thus, the type and anti-type relationship here is not between Old Covenant circumcision of the foreskin and Christian baptism. Rather, it is between circumcision of the foreskin and circumcision of the heart, which is the regeneration promised to be an essential aspect of the New Covenant (Jer. 31:31-34; Ezek. 36:25-27). The fulfillment and replacement of circumcision of the foreskin in the Old Testament is the

circumcision of the heart in the New Testament.

What does the phrase "by the circumcision of Christ" mean? It can possibly mean a few things: 1) the circumcision which was performed *on* Christ (Luke 2:21); 2) the circumcision which *belongs to* Christ; or 3) the circumcision which is performed *by* Christ. The translation, as given in the ESV, I think, is purposefully vague, because the expression in itself is vague and not altogether clear from the first reading. I believe we can quickly discard option one as being invalid. Nowhere is any significance attached to the circumcision performed on Christ in the New Testament in connection with our salvation. The second and third options I take together since they are not mutually exclusive. The circumcision of which Paul is writing is the Christian, New Covenant circumcision and it is the circumcision which Christ performs on believers by His Spirit. This circumcision is what is also known as regeneration in which the Spirit gives us a new heart and a new spirit. The Lord Christ, by the Spirit, makes us a new creation and gives us His Spirit to dwell in us (Ezk 36:25-27). Dr. Richard Barcellos, after citing Titus 3:5-6 writes, "Regeneration is by the Holy Spirit and through Jesus Christ and all is connected to the divine trinitarian act in saving us. The Holy Spirit is the effective agent of regeneration; however, he is, nonetheless, the Spirit of Christ and God (i.e., the Father)."[12] Through regeneration, we have put "off the body of the flesh", which means the death of the old man and are raised to new life in Christ. What we must notice is that both circumcision and the "putting off the body of the flesh" are clearly spiritual things. Our human bodies were not renewed or destroyed, nor were we circumcised in our human bodies, rather, we were circumcised and born again in spirit and inwardly. The "flesh" is the fallen nature. This "circumcision made without hands" resulted in the "putting off the body of the flesh". Paul continues and identifies this with burial with Christ in baptism. Similar to Romans 6, the going into the water symbolizes our death with Christ and the "putting off the body of the flesh".

Now we come to v. 12. Verse 12 begins with an aorist tense, passive voice, participle mood verb, συνταφέντες (*syntaphentes,* having been buried with). What does this all mean? The "**aorist** tense describes an undefined action that normally occurs in the past."[13] The **passive** "represents the action of the verb being done *unto* the subject but not *by* the subject."[14] As for **participles**, these "are those forms of a verb which function as adjectives: *the **running** horse, a **fallen** tree.*"[15] Dr. Barcellos writes:

> The participle, συνταφέντες ("having been buried"), finds its antecedent verb περιετμήθητε ("you were circumcised") of verse 11. It indicates a further and subordinate explanation of the "circumcision made without hands."[16]

Now we will have to consider the "when" of this baptism. This "baptism" is connected with the "circumcision made without hands", which is regeneration. We've got three options here. This baptism occurs 1) prior to regeneration, 2) simultaneous with regeneration, or 3) after regeneration.

Option 3 would understand the text as saying, "you were circumcised *after* being buried with him in baptism." This option would argue for baptism being necessary for salvation, and that baptism is the cause of regeneration, contrary to where it is taught that faith alone saves (Titus 3:4-7; Eph 2:8-9; etc.). We will look at a few texts which advocates of this position argue for baptism being necessary for salvation **below**. **Option 2** would read the text as "you were circumcised *while* you were buried with him in baptism." This is the baptismal regeneration position, but this view should be rejected as unbiblical and a denial of salvation by grace alone through faith alone. Options 2 and 3 are similar in their insistence that water baptism has something to do with one's salvation and regeneration. What we have left is **option 1**, the *subsequent* option. This position would read the text as follows: "you were circumcised *before* being buried with him in baptism", that is, regeneration came *before* this baptism. Dr. Barcellos gives a few reasons to adopt this position [not all reasons mentioned]:

1. Aorist participles [συνταφέντες ("having been buried")] subordinate to aorist verbs [περιετμήθητε ("you were circumcised")] can express subsequent action.
2. The burial in baptism here happens after the putting off the body of flesh which was affected by regeneration (circumcision made without hands). The "putting off the body of flesh" implies the death of the old man and then comes the burial.
3. This view maintains the death, burial, resurrection motif of other Pauline texts (e.g., Col. 2:12, 20; 3:13, 3; Rom. 6:3-8).
4. This view does not get into the difficulties of the others. This option maintains that there is a causal or logical relationship between regeneration and burial with Christ in baptism.

But, if there is a causal connection between baptism and regeneration, how have we not fallen into the errors of options 2 and 3? The reason is that we have not argued that this baptism is, in fact, *water* baptism. I believe that just like Romans 6:3-4 and Galatians 3:27, what we have here in Colossians 2:12 is not water baptism, but union with Christ, which is *typified* and *shown* by water baptism. The baptism, strictly speaking, of which Paul writes here is metaphorical and not water

baptism, but the reason the apostle chooses to express himself by “baptism” language is because the realities which he describes are *typified* and *signified* by water baptism. We gave a few reasons above for seeing regeneration (“circumcision made without hands”) as “the presupposition of and causal prerequisite to burial with Christ…The baptism in view here, though typified by water baptism, is not to be equated with it.”[17] What we have here is Paul teaching us that “all who are circumcised of heart are buried with Christ in spiritual baptism and raised with him spiritually, typified by their water baptism, effected through faith”[17], and not that water baptism *preceded* (came before) regeneration (“circumcision made without hands”). All the elect of God were united with their Savior in His death and resurrection, and by faith, they experience the blessings of this union after regeneration. Together with Christ the Lord, we were raised through faith to walk in newness of life. It would be very strange to see Paul believing that there is a certain kind of faith with which people could go into the waters of baptism to be regenerated, but that faith is one which does not justify them, or that they receive such a faith after they come out of the water. The fact is that this passage teaches that whoever is baptized is vitally united with Christ, but this couldn’t be said of those who are merely water baptized. For there are many unbelievers who were either baptized as children or later by their decision, yet they are unregenerate and reprobate, like Simon Magus who was baptized as an unbeliever. The resurrection of the believers in v. 12, which is spiritual, happens through faith, not water baptism. This is typified by the person immersed coming out of the water. To equate the baptism spoken of here directly and only with water baptism is to reject salvation by grace alone through faith alone. Water baptism is necessary for good and healthy Christian life, but not for salvation! Those Christians who have not yet submitted to the ordinance of Christ by being baptized in water by immersion, are in disobedience to the command of the Lord, but it does not mean that they’re unregenerate and unjustified. In conclusion, as Dr. Barcellos said, “As the Colossians’ circumcision was without hands, so was their burial and rising with Christ”[18] and he adds later on:

> Christians are complete in Christ because they have received a circumcision made without hands – regeneration. Regeneration produces faith that vitally unites souls to Christ in the efficacy of his burial and resurrection. This vital union with Christ in burial and resurrection is a spiritual baptism. Vital union brings believing sinners into the orbit of redemptive privilege and power.[19]

Therefore, what we have in this text is Paul teaching us that the circumcision of the Old Testament finds its counterpart in the circumcision of the heart in the New Testament. There is a spiritual baptism which is union with Christ in His death and resurrection is spoken of in terms of spiritual baptism which comes after regeneration, which union and the blessings thereof are experienced through faith.

Even a cursory reading of these passages (Rom 6:3-5; Col 2:11-12) will display a connection between water baptism and union with Christ in His death, burial, and resurrection. But a closer reading of these passages reveals that although water baptism is not that which they directly speak about, yet the realities described are *typified*, *symbolized*, and *signified* by water baptism.

Remission Of Sins

> Acts 22:16 And now why do you wait? Rise and **be baptized** and **wash away your sins**, calling on his name.’

The use of water in baptism obviously does not literally wash away our sins, rather, it is the blood of Christ through faith which cleanses us from all sin (e.g., 1 John 1:7-9; Rev 1:5), although it cannot be denied that baptism communicates such imagery of washing away sin, and therefore it is closely associated with believing and regeneration in the New Testament and it was immediately done after coming to faith in the Apostolic church. Albert Barnes says on this passage, ‘Sinners are represented in the Scriptures as defiled or polluted by sin. “To wash away the sins” denotes “the purifying of the soul from this polluted influence,” 1Co 6:11; Rev 1:5; Rev 7:14; Isa 1:16; Psa 51:2, Psa 51:7.’[6] There should be no delay to be baptized after coming to faith. There is no reason. Paul was clearly regenerated, came to faith and was justified prior to his baptism, as it may be seen from Acts 9:17-18 about him being filled with the Holy Spirit. After that, the only proper response is to identify with the Lord Who appeared to him by baptism. Baptism was a public act which identified Paul with the Lord and His people, even if there were not many people, yet, his baptism still would have been seen as a sign about an inward reality. Even John Calvin, the paedobaptist, agrees that baptism came after Paul’s faith. He wrote on this passage:

> It is not to be doubted but that Ananias did faithfully instruct Paul in the principles of godliness; for he would not have baptized him if he had been void of true faith. But Luke passeth over many things, and doth briefly gather the sum. Therefore, seeing Paul doth understand that the promised redemption is now given in Christ, Ananias saith, for good causes, that nothing ought to stay him from being baptized. But when he saith, Why tarriest thou? he doth not chide Paul, neither doth he accuse him of slackness, but he doth rather amplify the grace of God by adding baptism.[20]

Then Calvin cites Acts 10:47 where we have clearly baptism happening after faith. Moreover, there is also a call, as in this passage (Acts 10:47), for the urgency of baptism and of identifying with Christ, just like in Acts 22:16. What is also to be noted is the connection between Acts 10:47 and Acts 9:17-18. Paul is filled with the Holy Spirit and gets baptized, in the same way the Gentile believers receive the Holy Spirit, and then they are water baptized. Washing away of sin is symbolized by baptism, but the way sins are washed away is by "calling on His name", i.e., by faith in Christ, Who by His blood washed all our sins away. Not faith plus water baptism. There is no efficacy in the water for washing away sin, but the efficacy is in the Savior Whom we trust washing us by His blood. As John Gill noted:

> "And wash away thy sins"; or "be washed from thy sins"; not that it is in the power of man to cleanse himself from his sins; the Ethiopian may as soon change his skin, or the leopard his spots, as a creature do this; nor is there any such efficacy in baptism as to remove the filth of sin; persons may submit unto it, and yet be as Simon Magus was, in the gall of bitterness, and bond of iniquity;[10]

The stress for the forgiveness and washing away of sins, i.e., justification, as Paul elsewhere says (Rom. 10:9-10), is not in the water but in calling upon the name of the Lord Christ.

Public Act of Profession

> 1 Pet. 3:21 **Baptism**, which corresponds to this, **now saves you**, not as a removal of dirt from the body but as **an appeal to God for a good conscience**, **through the resurrection of Jesus Christ**,

We will have to discuss this passage below when it is used by those who advocate for baptism being salvific. What we will focus on in this passage is baptism being "an appeal to God for a good conscience."

That which corresponds to baptism is the flood of Noah, the eight people being saved, and the rest judged spoken of in v. 20. In like manner, baptism saves us. But it does not save in the sense that it removes sin. But it saves in the sense that we thereby show our reliance on Christ and His resurrection. Through baptism, we show reliance on Christ as the ark of our salvation.

The Greek word translated *appeal* is ἐπερώτημα *(eperotema,* G1906) and it is only used here in the New Testament. William Mounce defines it as "*an interrogation, question;* in NT *profession, pledge*"[21]. Scott-Jones gives the definition "answer to inquiry put to higher authority: hence, sanction" and "pledge" for 1 Peter 3:21.[22] Therefore, this aspect of baptism shows also the participation of the baptized party in the act. They are answering questions or pledging to something. They are pledging to live a life honoring to God. When the apostle Paul begins asking the question, "Do you not know that all of us who have been baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into his death?" (Rom. 6:3) he implies that certain ethical duties should have followed. When they were baptized, they bound themselves to some ethical and moral obligations. There certainly was and is a profession aspect of baptism. There is a profession aspect to our salvation. So, the apostle Paul declares, "if you confess with your mouth that Jesus is Lord and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved" (Rom. 10:9). In the same way, 1 Peter 3:21 seems to be saying that believers professed their faith in answer to a question(s) and appealed to God to receive "a good conscience" from Him. Hercules Collins cites William Perkins who explains this passage for us:

> Mr. *Perkins* saith, The **Greek word ἐπερωτημα, Interrogation**, 1 Pet. 3. 21. of a good Conscience, signifieth a **Stipulation or Promise which the person Baptised makes in Baptism**; and further saith, He hath a double Interrogation, one from the Minister, which he Conscientiously Answers, to perform the things Covenanted; and the other Interrogation is of **his Conscience unto God, whether he will accept him, if he Dedicate himself as his Faithful Servant**, tho a poor miserable sinner?[23]

While we are not yet discussing either the mode, subjects of baptism, or the propriety of infant baptism, it should be noted that paedobaptists often allege that infant baptism shows the unilateral way in which God deals with people. They emphasize the initiative of God in the baptism of infants. We Baptists never deny the initiative of God, but we see in this passage also, as Perkins calls it, our stipulation of the covenant. Therefore, this means that baptism is also an act of the baptized person toward God. But it is an act not only toward God, but to the watching world that I am being identified with Christ and I am pledging before God and before the watching world to live for Him.

Conclusion

We have seen from the texts above that water baptism signifies/typifies/shows/demonstrates union with Christ in His life,

death, burial, and resurrection. The believer is vitally united to their Lord. They were united with Him on the cross as well as in His resurrection and they come to share in the blessings of this union when they come to faith (**see more here**). Water baptism likewise signifies the fact that we are walking in newness of life with Christ our Lord, because of His resurrection and the receiving of the gift of the Holy Spirit. What is also signified by water baptism is the cleansing of sins. It is not the water, but the blood of Christ which cleanses us from all sin. But we are to go into the water to publicly identify with our Lord and show the spiritual realities in the physical, divine ordinance of water baptism. We identify with our Lord and we profess our faith and allegiance to Him.

Signs And Seal Of The Covenant

It is said in the Westminster Confession 28:1 that baptism is "a sign and seal of the covenant of grace" and in 27:1 that the "Sacraments are holy signs and seals of the covenant of grace." The 1689 omits these two things in its respective chapters, but does this entail a *denial* and *rejection* of these things? I believe that it does entail a denial of some aspects, but not an entire denial. Baptists reject that baptism functions as a *seal* of the Covenant of Grace, rather, it is the Holy Spirit Who is said to be the seal on believers in the New Testament. The same is true for the Lord's Supper; it is not a seal of the New Covenant, but the Holy Spirit is the seal. But we do believe that the holy ordinances do function as *signs* of the New Covenant.

In 1689 Federalist understanding, the Covenant of Grace *is* the New Covenant before it was formally established in the blood of Christ. In contrast, Westminster Federalism teaches that the New Covenant is the last and final administration of the Covenant of Grace. Westminster Federalism teaches that the Abrahamic, Mosaic, Davidic covenants were administrations of the Covenant of Grace. But the Covenant of Grace reaches its final administration and revelation in the New Covenant. But we, 1689 Federalists, deny this. We believe rather that the New Covenant/Covenant of Grace was revealed in these covenants and the blessings thereof given to the elect, but not because of the covenant they found themselves in, but because they believed the promise. We believe that the Covenant of Grace, prior to the cross, existed in *promise* form, and not an established covenant. As John Owen said, "Believers were saved under it [the Mosaic Covenant], but not by virtue of it. Sinners perished eternally under it, but by the curse of the original law of works."[24] See more on 1689 Federalism and the case for it in **chapter 7**.

Signs

What do we actually mean by a *sign* and a *seal?* A sign is something *visible* which points to inward and spiritual realities. The rainbow was the visible sign of the Noahic Covenant, it functioned as a token ("Something serving as an indication, proof, or expression of something else"[25]) that God will not destroy the earth by water again (Gen. 9:13-17). Circumcision functioned as a visible sign of the Abrahamic Covenant, which symbolized the need to be cleansed from sin through blood-spilling. For Abraham, it was a sign and a seal of the faith which he had prior to circumcision (Rom. 4:11). The Sabbath functioned as a visible sign of the Mosaic Covenant. It functioned as a sign that God had set His people apart (Ex. 31:12-17; Ezek. 20:12, 20). There is no sign mentioned in connection with the Davidic or the New Covenant *explicitly*. But the throne would probably fit as a visible sign for David that he will always have someone from his posterity to sit on it and rule over Israel. As for the New Covenant, we only have two "positive and sovereign institution[s]" (**28:1**). I admit from the start that we have no text in the New Testament identifying baptism or the Lord's Supper either as signs individually, or signs together of the New Covenant. But does this then imply that we have no *reason* to see them as signs at all? Obviously not. We see them as signs of the New Covenant when we understand what a sign or a token is.

We noted above on Colossians 2:11-12 that we do not see baptism replacing/fulfilling circumcision as *the* sign of the New Covenant, as it is often alleged by our paedobaptist brethren, but rather, circumcision of the foreskin has its counterpart in the circumcision of the heart. Circumcision of the foreskin was not fulfilled in water baptism, but rather in the circumcision of the heart. There is nothing said there about water baptism being fulfilled and has become the sign of the covenant, as it functioned for the Abrahamic Covenant. That was not the purpose or intention of the apostle. But we may indeed see baptism as a sign of the covenant because baptism *signifies* something. Our Confession says that baptism is "a sign of fellowship" and union with Christ, as we tried to show above. Baptism shows us the blessings of the covenant. In water baptism, we picture the spiritual union which we have in Christ and thus we have it as a sign of the blessings of the New Covenant. In baptism, we picture the death, burial, and resurrection of our Lord Christ and our union with Him. Therefore, baptism is a *sign* of the New Covenant.

The Lord's Supper likewise functions as a sign of the New Covenant. A sign to be celebrated and not neglected, because, with the celebration of the Lord's Supper, we remember the Lord's death until He comes (1 Cor. 11:26). When we remember the Lord's death in the Lord's Supper, we have the gospel in visible form. We remember His great love for His own and the sacrifice of His life for our sake. We experience spiritual union with our Savior. We remember and express our thanksgiving for His great salvation and the forgiveness which he offered us on the cross and offers us daily. We celebrate His grace, in that he, God over all blessed forever (Rom. 9:5), became a man to take our sins upon Himself and give us His perfect righteousness.

We have two sovereign institutions given to us by the Mediator of the New Covenant, the Lord Christ, to function as visible manifestations of the truths of the gospel. They serve as visible signs and tokens to show inward spiritual realities in us. Baptism and the Lord's Supper function as the two signs of the New Covenant.

Seal

What is the seal of the New Covenant? What is a seal? A seal is an "engraved or inscribed stamp, used for marking an impression in wax or other soft substance, to be attached to a document, or otherwise used by way of authentication or security."[26] Dr. William Mounce says that:

> Ancient documents were often sealed using a waxy substance not only to close them up and thereby protect the contents but also to authenticate the document by imprinting the seal (called a bulla) of the writer in the soft wax (cf. Jer. 32:11)…A seal in the ancient world established and expressed ownership (Gen. 4:15; Exod. 13:9; Deut. 6:8; Ezek. 9:4; Rev. 9:4; 13:16-17).[27]

A seal functions as a mark of *ownership* and *security,* therefore, the seal of the New Covenant must (unless the New Testament is the exception, of course) function this way too. So, who or what is described in this way in the New Testament? There can only be one answer, namely: the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit is explicitly identified as the seal upon believers (Eph. 1:13; 4:30). In 2 Corinthians 1:22, it is said that God "has also put his seal on us and given us his Spirit". Commenting on the first part, John Gill says:

> the seal by which they are sealed, is not any of the ordinances, as circumcision under the Old Testament, or baptism, or the Lord's supper under the New; for these are no seals, nor are they ever so called; but the Spirit of God himself, as the Holy Spirit of promise; for the same who, in the next clause, is called the earnest, is the seal;[10]

Moreover, in the same passage, the Spirit is said to be given as "a guarantee," a "pledge," or an "earnest." A *pledge* is a "solemn binding promise to do, give, or refrain from doing something"[28]. Both this passage and Ephesians 1:14 identify the Spirit as the *guarantee* given to believers. Neither the ordinances nor anything else other than the Spirit is the *seal* and *pledge* of the New Covenant and its members. For more on the Spirit as the seal and pledge see **here**. The signatories of the Confession, in an appendix to the Confession, said the following on this topic (excuse their bad spelling!):

> If our brethren do suppose baptism to be the seal of the Covenant which God makes with every beleiver (of which the Scriptures are altogether silent) it is not our concern to contend with them herein; yet we conceive the seal of that Covenant is the indwelling of the Spirit of Christ in the particular and individual persons in whom he resides, and nothing else, neither do they or we suppose that baptism is in any such manner substituted in the place of circumcision, as to have the same (and no other) latitude, extent, or terms, then circumcision had; for that was suited only for the Male children, baptism is an ordinance suited for every beleiver, whether male, or femal. That extended to all the males that were born in *Abrahams* house, or bought with his money, equally with the males that proceeded from his own loynes; but baptisme is not so far extended in any true Christian Church that we know of, as to be administred to all the poor infidel servants, that the members thereof purchase for their service, and introduce into their families; nor to the children born of them in their house.[29]

Often, Romans 4:11 along with Colossians 2:11-12 are used to argue that just like circumcision functioned as a sign and seal of the Abrahamic Covenant, so in the same way, baptism in the New Covenant functions as a sign and seal. Therefore, because the sign of the Abrahamic Covenant was given to infants, in like manner, the sign of the New Covenant ought to be given to infants of believing parents. Colossians 2 is used to show that circumcision is replaced with baptism and Romans 4 is used to show that circumcision of the flesh functioned as a sign and seal of the Abrahamic Covenant and was administered to infants.

There are several things to respond to. **First**, we reject the fundamental pillar of Westminster Federalism, namely, that there is one Covenant of Grace administered differently throughout the biblical covenants. Westminster Federalism sees the Abrahamic, Mosaic, and Davidic as essentially the same as the New Covenant. We, 1689 Federalists, deny this. There is an *essential difference* between the covenants. Only the New Covenant is the Covenant of Grace. Prior to the establishment of the New Covenant in Christ's blood, the Covenant of Grace existed in promise form. It was promised in every covenant and was typified in every covenant, yet it was not a formal covenant until ratified in the blood of its Mediator. Therefore, arguments along the lines of "infants received the sign of the Abrahamic Covenant, therefore, they ought to receive the sign(s) of the New Covenant" will not work. **Secondly**, we've tried to show that using Colossians 2:11-12 to argue for circumcision being fulfilled or replaced by baptism, is invalid. Circumcision of the flesh has its counterpart in the circumcision

of the heart under the New Covenant, not baptism. **Thirdly**, the sign and seal of the New Covenant is not baptism. The two signs of the New Covenant are Baptism and the Lord's Supper, and the seal is the Holy Spirit. Finally, we believe that there is a misinterpretation of Romans 4:11 on the part of those who use it in this way. The text says:

> Rom. 4:11-12 He [Abraham] received the **sign of circumcision** as a **seal of the righteousness** that **he had by faith while he was still uncircumcised**. The purpose was to make him the father of all who believe without being circumcised, so that righteousness would be counted to them as well, 12 and to make him the father of the circumcised who are not merely circumcised but who also walk in the footsteps of the faith that our father Abraham had before he was circumcised.

It is assumed by our Presbyterian brethren that circumcision as a sign and seal functioned in this way for everyone. But this is not what Paul is saying. He explicitly identifies that circumcision functioned in this way for Abraham. He is not making a blank statement about anyone and infants in the Old Covenant. Rather, because Abraham was a believer, circumcision functioned as a sign and seal for the promises of God to him and the righteousness which he had by faith alone. Faith was the *prerequisite* for circumcision to be a sign and a seal for Abraham in this passage. Circumcision functioned as a seal of the righteousness which Abraham had by faith (Gen. 15:6). It was a token that made certain in his mind the promises of God to him and his posterity. It did not function in this way for Ishmael or Esau, but only to Abraham who was justified *before* receiving the sign of circumcision. Therefore, the use of Colossians 2:11-12 and Romans 4:11 to argue for the replacement of circumcision by baptism, and that baptism is now a sign and seal of the covenant and ought to be given to the natural offspring of Christians, we believe is inaccurate. Paul actually says that Abraham was credo-circumcised. Hercules Collins answers an objection concerning "*Circumcision was a Seal of the New Covenant to Believers and their Seed under the Law, so is Baptism to the Seed of Christian Parents under the Gospel":*

> This Objection is grounded upon *Rom*. 4. 11. where 'tis said, ***Abraham received the Sign of Circumcision, a Seal of the Righteousness of his Faith***. First, Consider, it's not said, *Circumcision was a Seal of the New Covenant to* Abraham *and his Seed*, that is begg'd in the Objection; the Text saith, *It was a* ***Token of the Righteousness of Abraham's Faith***. But **it could not be a Seal of Faith to an Infant which had none**. The scope of the Apostle in this *Chapter* is to shew, that *Abraham* himself was not justified by Works, no not by Circumcision, but by Faith, which he had long before he was Circumcised. The **reason of his Circumcision was, to be a Seal and Confirmation to him, that he by his Faith should be a Father of many Nations**; and that the poor *Gentiles* should be accepted of God by Faith, without the Works of the Law, though not circumcised, seeing *Abraham's* Faith was imputed to him for Righteousness, not when Circumcised, but Uncircumcised. This being the scope of this Place, a **Man had need have a great deal of skill to prove Pedo-Baptism from it**.[30]

We could also cite Benjamin Keach to the same effect:

> **Circumcision was only a Seal to *Abraham*'s Faith, or a Confirmation of that Faith he had long before he was Circumcised**; but so it could not be said to be to any Infant that had no Faith. It was indeed a **Sign put into the Flesh of Infants**; but **a Sign, and Seal too only to *Abraham*, witnessing to him that he had a Justifying Faith**...You ought not therefore to call **Circumcision a Seal to any but to *Abraham***, neither ought you to call it a **Seal of any other thing to him than what the Scripture calls it a Seal of**, *viz. "And he received Circumcision a Seal of the Righteousness of the Faith which he had being yet uncircumcised" (Rom. 4:11)...*
>
> But in a word, **we know nothing called a Seal of the New Covenant, but the holy Spirit, which the Saints were said to be sealed with after they believed, unto the day of Redemption** (Eph. 1:13; 4:30); God by setting his Seal upon us assures us that we are his, and that we shall have Eternal Life.
>
> **Baptism is called a Figure, but nowhere a Seal** and a Sign or Figure proper only to such who have Understanding to discern the Spiritual things and Mysteries that are represented thereby, and wrought in them.[31]

These citations do not only support our position, but also show that the framers of the Confession and our forefathers, did not believe that baptism functioned as a seal of the New Covenant. There is only one seal of the New Covenant and that is the Blessed Spirit.

See **here** in **chapter 7** for a little more on this passage**.**

Conclusion On Signs And Seal

The New Covenant has two signs, baptism and the Lord's Supper. The seal of the New Covenant is the third Person of the

Blessed Trinity, the Holy Spirit. A *sign* is something *visible* which *signifies* the realities of the covenant, while a *seal* is a stamp of *ownership* and *protection.*

Not Necessary For Salvation

Almost always, when generally speaking of baptism, the question has to be answered concerning the connection between water baptism and salvation. Is water baptism necessary for salvation? Does an unbaptized person get to heaven? Are the sins of an unbaptized person forgiven? The "person" of whom we are speaking in this connection is a believer. He believes that Jesus Christ died on the cross to take his sins away and through faith in Christ, he is justified before God on the basis of Christ's work alone. There are groups, which I consider heretical because they teach that baptism is necessary for salvation. They are basically saying that faith alone is not enough to save, but something else must be coupled with that faith for the person to be saved, and that thing is water baptism. This turns salvation into a works system, even if the thing to be done is nothing great. There are several texts which, when read in isolation from the rest of the Bible, seem to teach that baptism is necessary for salvation. We will look at a few of these texts below, but first, let's see why baptism is not necessary for salvation.

Let us **first** begin with the biblical doctrine of salvation by grace and through faith alone (e.g., Eph. 2:8-9). Justification is by faith alone (e.g., Rom. 3:21). Baptism is a deed of faith, but it is not faith. It is something which the regenerate heart would want to do in obedience to their Lord, but not a thing/deed which "activates" the fruits of faith (forgiveness, justification). See **chapter 11** for more on justification by faith alone. In every discussion of justification by the apostle Paul, baptism is never seen as a condition of justification or a prerequisite for the forgiveness of sins, but faith is everywhere the condition in such discussions. Faith is the empty hand where Christ, Who is our righteousness, is placed in. This is my fundamental presupposition.

The **second** reason is the obvious example of the thief on the cross. He expressed faith in Christ and he was assured by the words of Christ that he will be with Christ in Heaven (Luke 23:39-43). He expressed simple faith in Christ and asked Him to remember Him and Christ did not refuse this man. He did not require water baptism or anything else from him. His simple faith in Christ saved him. This is a clear example of a person going to heaven who was not baptized.

The **third** reason is that various people are said to have the Spirit before being water baptized. Paul was filled with the Holy Spirit prior to his baptism (Acts 9:17-18). The first Gentile converts to the Lord, first receive His Spirit and then water baptism (Acts 10:44-48). We recognize that there are instances where water baptism occurs first and then the giving of the Spirit, but these are special occasions peculiar to that time in the foundation of the church by the apostles. The Lord had meant His church to be built through the apostles, so that's why they're the ones in Acts who have received the authority to give the Spirit by the laying on of hands. The apostles John and Peter came and prayed for Samaria to receive the Spirit (Acts 8:14-17). Through the preaching of Peter, the Spirit fell upon the Gentiles (Acts 10:44-48), although that was prior to their water baptism as noted above. Paul lays his hands on a group of about twelve men for them to receive the Spirit and His spiritual gifts after their water baptism in Christ's name (Acts 19:1-7). Yet the normative New Testament teaching is that believers receive the Spirit at the time of faith and by faith (Eph. 1:13-14; Gal. 3:2). Water baptism comes after receiving the Spirit, yet for the foundational period of the church, God had desired to show the authority of the apostles in withholding the Spirit and giving Him when they prayed or laid their hands on people.

The **fourth** reason is 1 Corinthians 1:14-17. Paul says, "Christ did not send me to baptize but to preach the gospel". But if baptism is necessary for salvation, why would Paul preach the gospel to a wide audience, yet baptize a few? In this passage, we see baptism and salvation to be two separate things, in which baptism is not necessary for salvation. Baptism is not part of the gospel, but it is the most proper response to it. The task of the apostle, as given by His Lord, was to preach the gospel, let others do the baptisms. The apostle does not disregard baptism, but he has not received the commission of baptizing everyone who turns to the Lord. It would seem very strange, if baptism was necessary for salvation, for Paul to say, "I thank God that I baptized none of you except Crispus and Gaius". The apostle, according to the theology which sees baptism as necessary for salvation, would be thanking God that only two persons (or households) were saved by his preaching, although, the passage implies that a lot more people heard the gospel proclamation from Paul, received it and yet were not baptized by him. They were not unsaved or unjustified until they were baptized by someone else, but they were, in fact, justified because Paul was sent to turn people from darkness to light and turn them to the Son.

Misused Texts

There are texts that when read in isolation from the things which we noted, seem to teach that baptism is necessary for salvation. We will take a look at a few. We have already taken a brief look at **Acts 22:16 above,** so we will not deal with it here.

Mark 16:16

> Whoever believes and is baptized will be saved, but whoever does not believe will be condemned.

Mark 16:9-20 is widely regarded as an addition to the Gospel of Mark and not part of the original God-breathed text of the Bible, therefore, in a sense, what it teaches does not have authority since it is not part of the original. Yet, I believe what is said in these verses is not in contradiction to the Bible.[32]

Notice that the writer (whoever it was) makes a careful distinction between salvation and condemnation. It is said that people will be saved if they believe and are baptized, but, then we would expect the passage to say "but whoever does not believe *and is not baptized* will be condemned." But this is not how the passage goes. This is because baptism is not a condition of salvation or damnation. Baptism is the proper response to the gospel and goes hand in hand with faith. There were no unbaptized believers in the apostolic church, people did not wait to get baptized, but did that right away, just like on Pentecost with 3000 people! John Gill noted on this passage, saying, "baptism, though it is said to save by the resurrection of Christ, as it is a means of leading faith to Christ's resurrection for justification, yet has no casual influence upon salvation; it is not essential to it; the thief on the cross, went to heaven without it, and Simon Magus to hell with it; but it is the duty of every one that believes, and he that truly believes, ought to be baptized, and prove the truth of his faith, by his obedience to Christ, and such shall be saved"[10]. GotQuestions Ministries, in answering this question, likewise note the absence of "non-baptism" as a condition of damnation:

> While this verse tells us something about believers who have been baptized (they are saved), it does not say anything about believers who have *not* been baptized. In order for this verse to teach that baptism is necessary for salvation, a third statement would be necessary, viz., "He who believes and is not baptized will be condemned" or "He who is not baptized will be condemned." But, of course, neither of these statements is found in the verse.[33]

Jamieson-Fausset-Brown note that 'Baptism is here put for the external signature of the inner faith of the heart, just as "confessing with the mouth" is in Rom 10:10; and there also as here this outward manifestation, once mentioned as the proper fruit of faith, is not repeated in what follows (Rom 10:11).'[7] Using this passage to teach that baptism is necessary for salvation, is to go beyond what the passage is saying and to treat a text of dubious origin as canonical.

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.

This passage, when read for the first time, seems to give the idea that what the Lord Jesus is speaking about is water baptism, but that cannot be for several reasons. The most obvious is that Christian baptism was not yet instituted. There was no baptism in the Name of the Father, Son, and Spirit yet, therefore, it is very strange for the Lord Jesus to be talking to Nicodemus about something which has not yet been instituted. Nicodemus, "a ruler of the Jews" (John 3:1), comes to the Lord Jesus in the night to inquire about Him and His signs and he acknowledges that God is with the Lord Jesus (John 3:2). But, the Lord Jesus' response is strange. He said to Nicodemus, "Truly, truly, I say to you, unless one is born again he cannot see the kingdom of God" (John 3:3). Then Nicodemus asks about how one is born again (John 3:4) and the new get the answer in the passage under consideration. The way that one is born again or born from above, is by water and the Spirit. What is meant by this? This is an allusion to an Old Testament prophecy about the New Covenant. In Ezekiel 36, we read:

> Ezek. 36:25-27 **I will sprinkle clean water on you**, and you shall be clean from all your uncleannesses, and from all your idols I will cleanse you. 26 And I will give you a new heart, and a new spirit I will put within you. And I will remove the heart of stone from your flesh and give you a heart of flesh. 27 And **I will put my Spirit within you**, and cause you to walk in my statutes and be careful to obey my rules.

This was the background of the Lord's answer. He was not speaking of something which did not yet exist. Rather, He was speaking about the promise of the Old Testament about regeneration and the new birth. This new birth will be accomplished by the work of God. They will be born of/out of spiritual water of cleansing. It is most obvious that water is a sign of cleansing even in the case of baptism (cf. Acts 22:16, see also **above**). We will be cleansed from our sins and our idolatry when the Lord sprinkles spiritual water upon us (this is no text for the mode of baptism!). But we will also be born from and out of His Spirit. He will be the Agent Who does this work of regeneration in us and He will be given by God to us so that we may walk in His paths. His work will consist in the elect of God being born again, and being born from above, born from the Spirit. Therefore, what the Lord Jesus is saying is that anyone who is not regenerated will neither enter nor see the Kingdom of God. Nicodemus does not understand these things and the Lord Jesus points out that he, as a teacher of Israel, should have understood these things (John 3:9-11). In essence, what the Lord Jesus said to Nicodemus is, "How is it, you, as a teacher of Israel, don't know your Old Testament well enough?" He should have known of these things, but he did not, because these things are spiritual and Nicodemus was natural (Col. 2:14). As the discussion moves forward, the Lord Jesus points out the way of salvation to Nicodemus in John 3:16. Faith is the requirement for eternal life, not faith *and* baptism. Faith and faith

alone is the requirement for salvation, but saving faith is never alone. The Lord was also pointing to the exclusion of human effort in this great work of salvation. We cannot control the Spirit. “The wind blows where it wishes, and you hear its sound, but you do not know where it comes from or where it goes. So it is with everyone who is born of the Spirit” (John 3:8). In other words, “It is the Spirit who gives life; the flesh is no help at all” (John 6:63).

To assume that the *water* being spoken of here is the water of baptism is to ignore the Old Testament background of this text, and to say that Jesus was speaking of an ordinance which was not yet instituted.

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.

This is one of the most common passages used by Oneness Pentecostals and others to teach that baptism is necessary for salvation. At the face of it, we must admit, that we could understand the passage to be teaching that baptism is necessary for salvation. But the question is, is that the proper and contextual interpretation? I believe the answer to that question to be no. Let us first note the context. On the day of Pentecost, the apostle Peter preached a sermon in which the response of the people was, “Brothers, what shall we do?” (Acts 2:37) and the apostle Peter gives them the answer to their problem. It is the claim of those who hold to baptism being necessary for salvation that Peter is saying that these two things, 1) repentance and 2) water baptism, are necessary for salvation, otherwise people will not be saved. This interpretation, which is in contradiction not only to the rest of apostolic teaching but to what is said in the same chapter, is to be rejected.

First of all, in the same chapter, it is declared, on the basis of Joel’s prophecy, that “everyone who calls upon the name of the Lord shall be saved” (Acts 2:21). There is no mention here of baptism or anything else, but simply faith in calling upon the name of the Lord Jesus. Moreover, in Acts 10:43, faith is said to be the means of forgiveness. I believe that biblical faith presupposes repentance and biblical repentance presupposes faith. They’re always together (**see here** for more on that). There is not one without the other. They are the two sides of the same coin. Therefore, when Peter calls upon the people to repent, he is at the same time commanding them to call upon the name of the Lord (Acts 2:21; Rom. 10:9-13). That repentance is the essential part of receiving forgiveness of sins is seen from Acts 26:18 (turning from darkness to light), and also from Acts 10:43 where faith is explicitly named to be the means of receiving forgiveness. Not only this, but the passage itself links repentance and forgiveness of sins together. In the Greek, the word *repent* is in the plural and so is “everyone of you” and “forgiveness of your sins,” while on the other hand, the command to be baptized is singular. This indicates that repentance is directly connected with the forgiveness of sins and it is presented as the condition for the forgiveness of sins. The passage, would then read as: “All of you repent, each of you get baptized, and all of you will receive forgiveness.” Repentance is what will bring forgiveness of sins. GotQuestions presents this as:

> Therefore, when you take into account the change in person and plurality, essentially what you have is “You (plural) repent for the forgiveness of your (plural) sins, and let each one (singular) of you be baptized (singular).” Or, to put it in a more distinct way: “You all repent for the forgiveness of all of your sins, and let each one of you be baptized.”[34]

This is similar to what is said of John’s baptism. It was “a baptism of repentance for the forgiveness of sins” (Mark 1:4; Luke 3:3). It was a baptism whose purpose was to demonstrate that people were repentant. Peter does not connect repentance and baptism to the forgiveness of sins, but repentance only. True repentance will produce obedience to the gospel and the ordinance of Christ to publicly identify with Him. To understand this singular passage, in isolation from the rest of the Bible, to teach that baptism is essential for salvation, is to misuse Scripture. In the next chapter, Peter preaching to Israelites again mentions nothing of baptism, but he does call them to repentance “that your sins may be blotted out” (Acts 3:19). And so they did preach elsewhere, never making water baptism an essential part of or a requirement for salvation.

Galatians 3:27

> For as many of you as were baptized into Christ have put on Christ.

This passage is similar to Romans 6:3-5 and Colossians 2:11-12 in which baptism is used metaphorically to speak about union in Christ and not water baptism. Water baptism is, in fact, a sign and a picture of union with Christ, but it is not the cause thereof. The simple fact is that there are many who have been baptized but have not put on Christ. They will be damned, even though they had got themselves wet. To be baptized “into” Christ is to be closely identified with Him. In the same way, the Israelites were closely identified with Moses when they were baptized “into Moses” (1 Cor. 10:2). To be baptized into someone is to be closely identified with that person. This is not to be confused with Matthew 28:19 where it is said that Christians should be baptized *into* or *in* “the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit”. There, not only identification with God is implied, but also literal water baptism as the book of Acts shows. Charles J. Ellicott notes, ‘To

be baptised “into Christ” is something more than merely “to be baptised in the name of Christ.” It implies the contracting of a very close and intimate relation, the nature of which is expressed in the phrase which follows.’[26] To be baptized into Christ is to be closely identified with Him and, as the passage says, to put on Christ. To put on His character and His sentiments, being united with Him and to seek to be like Him. It is to have our identity in Him. Therefore, every true believer, even if not water baptized, is, in fact, baptized into Christ. They are in union with Christ, even if they have not yet taken the step to signify this union publicly.

Titus 3:5

> he saved us, not because of works done by us in righteousness, but according to his own mercy, **by the washing of regeneration** and renewal of the Holy Spirit,

Wayne Grudem writes that this passage is not speaking of water baptism, but ‘“the washing of regeneration,” explicitly stating that it is a spiritual giving of new life. Water baptism is simply not mentioned in the passage.’[35] He is right. There is not an iota said here about water baptism. The Greek word for baptism is not used here, neither is the Greek word used here for “washing” ever used of baptism in the New Testament. The word is only used here and in Ephesians 5:26. There may be an allusion to baptism and what is signified by baptism, but this passage, along with Ephesians 5:26, is not about water baptism, but about spiritual cleansing, the thing *signified* by water baptism. The washing in Ephesians 5 happens by the Word of God and not by physical water.

This “washing of regeneration” is the work of renewal and recreation by the Holy Spirit which was promised in the Old Testament (Ezek. 36:25-27). He is the Agent Who brings the new birth to the elect (John 3:3-8). Our works are explicitly excluded at the beginning of the passage, therefore, no act of baptism can bring the regenerating work of the Spirit to pass, but the Spirit works as He pleases and on whom He pleases. The way that God saved us was “by the washing of regeneration and renewal of the Holy Spirit.” God saved us by regenerating us and giving us the Spirit in accordance with His promise in the Old Testament. This washing and regeneration are not effects produced because of water baptism, but because of the Spirit’s work in God’s elect. John Gill notes:

> **by the washing of regeneration**, and renewing of the Holy Ghost; by the former is meant, not the ordinance of water baptism; for that is never expressed by washing, nor is it the cause or means of regeneration; the cause being the Spirit of God, and the means the word of God: and besides, persons ought to be regenerated before they are baptized; and they may be baptized, and yet not regenerated, as Simon Magus; nor is it a saving ordinance, or a point of salvation; nor can it be opposed to works of righteousness, as this washing is; for that itself is a work of righteousness; see Mt 3:15 and if persons were saved by that, they would be saved by a work of righteousness, contrary to the text itself: but regenerating grace is meant, or a being born of water, and of the Spirit; that is, of the grace of the Spirit, comparable to water for its purity and cleansing virtue: hence such who are regenerated and sanctified, are said to be washed and cleansed, having their hearts purified by faith, and their consciences purged from sin by the blood of Christ[10]

Philip Schaff notes that “**Renewing** is added to further define ‘regeneration.’ The word occurs in Rom 12:2. It describes the moral change which passes on a man when he becomes a new creature in Christ Jesus.”[36] Regeneration and renewal is the work of God the Spirit in the elect of God to bring them to faith and vital union with their Savior. The HCSB translates this clause with “through the washing of regeneration and renewal by the Holy Spirit” and notes:

> Salvation comes **not by works** but through the washing of **regeneration** and **renewal** by the **Holy Spirit.** Some interpreters have understood this as saying that baptism (“the washing”) causes salvation, but in the context human deeds are clearly downplayed and the emphasis is on divine action and initiative. The **washing** described here is the spiritual cleansing that is symbolized outwardly by water baptism.[37]

Yes, we believe that baptism symbolizes regeneration and union with Christ, but it is not an instrument nor cause of regeneration. Even if the “washing of regeneration” is taken to be a reference to the waters of baptism, which I deny, even then, “Baptismal regeneration can only be found here by substituting the sign for the thing signified.”[38] The one baptized pictures their regeneration and union with their Lord by it but does not owe their regeneration to baptism, but to the work of the Holy Spirit in them.

1 Peter 3:21

> **Baptism**, which corresponds to this, **now saves you**, not as a removal of dirt from the body but as an appeal to God for a good conscience, through the resurrection of Jesus Christ,

To me, it is an utter sign of disrespect to the Word of God when passages are quoted partially or out of context, and the use of this passage by those who believe in baptismal regeneration is a perfect example. I've seen a couple of people online partially quoting "Baptism…now saves you" and act like this was the only thing that Peter said. The obvious thing that they want to communicate by this is that baptism is necessary for salvation, but reading the verse as a whole, this idea is refuted by the passage itself!

Baptism does, in fact, save, but the question we must ask ourselves is, "*how* does baptism save?" The apostle Peter was just writing about the Flood and he says that baptism corresponds to the floodwaters. Albert Barnes, the Presbyterian, noted on this passage, saying, "The meaning here is, that baptism corresponded to, or had a resemblance to, the water by which Noah was saved; or that there was a use of water in the one case which corresponded in some respects to the water that was used in the other; to wit, in effecting salvation."[6] The way that baptism saves is "not as a removal of dirt from the body." What might this mean? I believe the obvious answer is that Peter is speaking of sin as dirt of the body. Water Baptism does not cleanse or remove sin from the body. John Gill noted that the design of baptism is not "to take away either original or actual sin; this only the blood of Christ can do, and it is not a mere external cleansing of the body"[10]. Sometime in the early church, the belief began in baptism as cleansing sin or original sin from infants, but this idea is refuted by the apostle. Albert Barnes noted on this clause:

> Not a mere external washing, however solemnly done. No outward ablution or purifying saves us, but that which pertains to the conscience. This important clause is thrown in to guard the statement from the abuse to which it would otherwise be liable, the supposition that baptism has of itself a purifying and saving power. To guard against this, the apostle expressly declares that he means much more than a mere outward application of water.[6]

Water Baptism does *signify* and *typify* regeneration and salvation, but it is not the or a cause of salvation, but only Christ the Lord and faith in Him is the cause of salvation. Believers are not saved by baptism, but by *what* baptism signifies, the death and resurrection of the Savior. Rather than removing sin and cleansing us from unrighteousness, water baptism is "an appeal to God for a good conscience." What does this mean? The NASB Study Bible notes, "The act of baptism is a commitment on the part of the believer in all good conscience to make sure that what baptism symbolizes will become a reality in his life."[39] In baptism, we make a commitment to walk in the new life which baptism symbolizes (Rom. 6:4) and to follow in the steps of our Savior, being united with Him in His life also and walking in the same way as He did (1 John 2:6). In baptism, we make a public profession of faith and publicly identify with our Savior, therefore, we should seek to live holy so as not to dishonor our Lord and bring shame to His Name. John Gill wrote:

> for, to baptism, profession of faith in Christ, and of the doctrine of Christ in a pure conscience, is requisite; and in baptism persons make a public confession of God, and openly put on Christ before men: the sense seems plainly this; that then is baptism rightly performed, and its end answered, when a person, conscious to himself of its being an ordinance of Christ, and of his duty to submit to it, does do so upon profession of his faith in Christ, in obedience to his command, and "with" a view to his glory; in doing which he discharges a good conscience towards God: and being thus performed, it saves[10]

Wayne Grudem writes concerning 1 Peter 3:21, saying:

> We could paraphrase Peter's statement by saying, "Baptism now saves you—not the outward physical ceremony of baptism but the inward spiritual reality which baptism represents." In this way, Peter guards against any view of baptism that would attribute automatic saving power to the physical ceremony itself.
>
> Peter's phrase, "an appeal to God for a clear conscience," is another way of saying "a request for forgiveness of sins and a new heart." When God gives a sinner a "clear conscience," that person has the assurance that every sin has been forgiven and that he or she stands in a right relationship with God (Heb. 9:14 and 10:22 speak this way about the cleansing of one's conscience through Christ). To be baptized rightly is to make such an "appeal" to God: it is to say, in effect, "Please, God, as I enter this baptism which will cleanse my body outwardly I am asking you to cleanse my heart inwardly, forgive my sins, and make me right before you." Understood in this way, baptism is an appropriate symbol for the beginning of the Christian life.[40]

What saves is not water baptism, but the resurrection of Jesus Christ. We are saved thanks to and through the resurrection of Christ (Rom. 4:25). Peter says at the beginning of the epistle that God has "caused us to be born again to a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead" (1 Pet. 1:3). Not through water baptism or any other work, but thanks to and through the resurrection of our victorious Savior.

Thus we see that these passages, which some use to argue for the necessity of baptism for salvation, are misinterpreted and isolated from the rest of Holy Writ.

---

§2 The Proper Subjects Of Baptism

2. Those who do actually **profess repentance towards God, faith in, and obedience to, our Lord Jesus Christ,** are the only proper subjects of this ordinance. **1**
    1. Matt. 3:1-12; Mark 1:4-6; Luke 3:3-6; Matt. 28:19-20; Mark 16:15-16; John 4:1-2; 1 Cor. 1:13-17; Acts 2:37-41; 8:12-13, 36-38; 9:18; 10:47-48; 11:16; 15:9; 16:14-15, 31-34; 18:8; 19:3-5; 22:16; Rom. 6:3-4; Gal. 3:27; Col. 2:12; 1 Peter 3:21; Jer. 31:31-34; Phil. 3:3; John 1:12-13; Matt. 21:43

Paragraph 1 defined what Baptism signifies. Paragraph 2 moves to point out **the only proper subjects of this ordinance**. Who are these? It is only they **who do actually profess repentance towards God** (e.g., Acts 2:38-39). Since we cannot see into people's hearts to know if they truly are believers, the only way whereby we may know this is by their profession and walk of life. Therefore, baptism is to be administered to them who profess the gospel. They are repentant, but also have **faith in, and obedience to, our Lord Jesus Christ** (e.g., Acts 8:12). The subjects of baptism are they who profess to be repentant, have faith in Jesus, and seek to obey Him. No one is to be baptized who is unable to profess the faith, which excludes infants from being subjects of Christian baptism.

Professing and Repentant Believers

All Baptists hold to the teaching that only those who *believe* should be baptized. Even paedobaptists agree, except for infants, that those who are baptized should profess the Christian faith. They also acknowledge that there is neither command nor example of an infant baptized, therefore, the passages which I will present of believers being baptized, they will not object to. But they will try to make an exception for infants on the basis of the Abrahamic Covenant and the inclusion of infants therein, but we will come to that later.

The Great Commission

> Matt. 28:19-20 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**. And behold, I am with you always, to the end of the age."

Here we see in the commission of Christ to His disciples that He calls them to go into all the world and make the world His disciples. His disciples are to be taught everything that He commanded the apostles, but, at the beginning of this process of discipleship, there is an important commandment to be followed, namely, being baptized. As the apostles preach the gospel they should likewise call upon the people to be baptized in "the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit" and to make a public profession of their faith. Notice that the time of when this baptism takes place is when they become disciples of Christ. They first become disciples and then they are baptized, but their discipleship does not stop at the moment of their baptism, but rather continues. Their baptism should be the first step of discipleship as they seek to proclaim the gospel of the Kingdom and observe all that He commanded them. The command given by the Lord is that we "go" into the world. Our message to the world is that of the King and His Kingdom. The reason why we should go is that we make disciples. A disciple is a student, but he is more than a student. A disciple is a follower and a copier of his teacher. Our Lord describes His followers using this word. The Lord demands everything from His followers, saying, "If anyone comes to me and does not hate his own father and mother and wife and children and brothers and sisters, yes, and even his own life, he cannot be my disciple. 27 Whoever does not bear his own cross and come after me cannot be my disciple" (Luke 14:26-27). His disciples abide in His Word and therefore, know the truth (John 8:31-32). In other words, they are to make Christ-followers, i.e., Christians of all nations. The scope of this mission is the whole world. No longer is the true religion and gospel limited to Israel, but is sent into the whole world and the whole world is invited to repent and believe the gospel.

The next question concerns the way in which disciples are made. Disciples are made by the gospel and the Holy Spirit. It is a supernatural work of God. Baptism and teaching do not, in themselves, make disciples, they feed and maintain disciples. But it is the gospel used by the Holy Spirit which is the disciple-maker. Nonetheless, disciples are those who are taught and who imitate their Master. Therefore, these disciples are fed and maintained by teaching. Yet the way in which they publicly become disciples is by baptism. The "them" in "baptizing them" is a reference back to those who were discipled. John Gill notes:

> **baptizing them**; not all nations, for the antecedent to the relative "them", cannot be "all nations"; since παντα τα εθνη, the words for "all nations", are of the neuter gender, whereas αυτους, "them", is of the masculine: nor can it be thought that it should be the mind of Christ, that all the individuals of all nations should be baptized, as Heathens, Turks, and Jews; but μαθητας, "disciples", supposed and contained in the word μαθητευσατε, "teach", or "make disciples"; such as are taught, and made disciples by teaching, or under the ministry of the word by the Spirit of God[10]

In this connection, baptism comes after the making of disciples by the preaching of the gospel. Baptism, as we argued above on its significance, portrays the gospels and is an act by which we profess our allegiance to Christ (Rom. 6:3-4; Col. 2:11-12; 1 Pet. 3:21). Therefore, it is to be given to those who are disciples (i.e., Christians) who have had the reality which baptism portrays. Furthermore, they are instructed in all things which our Lord commanded so that they would obey. But evangelism and discipleship come first. The King did not give a commission to baptize those who were not discipled. He did not give a commission to baptize the nations. Rather, we are to preach the gospel to the nations and teach everyone who becomes a disciple that they are to take their cross upon themselves and follow the Lord Jesus. Keach observes that

> there must be teaching, **they must be first Taught, or made Disciples**, for the word μαθητεύσατε, as is well known and confessed by all, doth signify, to discipulize, or make Disciples, and **next baptize them**. And this also we find was his own practice, **first to make Disciples**, and **then to baptize them**.[41]

In this connection, it is good to observe the passage which Keach refers to which is John 4:1-2:

> Now when Jesus learned that the Pharisees had heard that Jesus was **making** and **baptizing** more disciples than John 2 (although Jesus himself did not baptize, but only his disciples),

Although our Lord did not Himself baptized, yet He supervised and presided over these baptisms in such a way that they could be attributed to Him although not performed by Him. Notice the order in this passage which is the same in the Great Commission. First, disciples are made. Second, they are baptized. This is significant because this was happening while John the Baptist was still alive and possibly throughout Christ's earthly ministry. So, at the end of His earthly ministry, Christ essentially makes from this "practice" a command to be applied to the whole world. It was reported to John the Baptist that the Lord Jesus "is baptizing, and all are going to him" and John acknowledged God's hand in this, saying, "A person cannot receive even one thing unless it is given him from heaven" (John 3:26-27). The "making" and "baptizing" cannot be disconnected from each other neither can they speak of more than one group of people. This is also the background in which the disciples could interpret the Great Commission, for they were used to make disciples and baptize them. It would not enter the mind of the disciples that baptism could be disconnected from discipleship. This could also be proven in how the disciples carried this commission out in the book of Acts.

In connection to the Great Commission and John 4, John Norcott notes:

> *Fifthly*, Note, what is precedent to Baptism: *Go teach*, there must be teaching; God is a Spirit, and he seeks such to worship him, that worship him in spirit and truth, *Joh*. 4. 24. therefore **there must go *Teaching before Baptism*, or else they will never worship him in spirit and truth.** *Go teach and baptize*. I confess many men do say the word Teach in the Greek, is, Make disciples, and I dare not say against it; for I find it the very practice of Jesus Christ, **he did first make Disciples**, and **then baptized them**, *Joh.* 4. 1. *Jesus made and baptized more disciples than John*; here was **first a making Disciples**, and then a **baptizing them**; but how many poor souls *Ignorantly baptize* those who never were made Disciples but, Christ saith, *teach and baptize them*.[42]

Hercules Collins, one of the signers of this Confession, in 1691, wrote a short book entitled "*Believers Baptism from Heaven, and of Divine Institution. Infants Baptism from Earth, and Human Invention*", in which he makes the following observations on the Great Commission texts from Mark 16:16 and Matthew 28:19:

> Doct 1. It's the unalterable Will of Jesus Christ, who is King and Law-giver to his Gospel-Church, that all Persons believe before they are baptized.
>
> Doct. 2. It's the indispensable Duty of all true Believers to be Baptized.
>
> I call it an indispensable Duty, because I know no Place where our Lord hath left this to the Liberty of Believers to do it,

or leave it undone, as best pleaseth them.[43]

Baptism is not an optional thing in the Christian life, rather, it should take place at the beginning of the Christian life. Moreover, it is the duty of every true believer to be baptized. Negligence of this ordinance is a sin and is disobedience to our Lord and Master. For those calling the name of Christ, but have not been properly baptized yet, what is hindering you? Isn't your Lord's command and example enough motivation for you? What are you waiting for? To stop sinning before you get baptized? In that case, you won't ever be baptized! Obey your Master, and enter the waters of baptism and signify your union with Christ in His death, burial, and resurrection! As Collins observed, "Nothing sure can be more obliging Believers unto Obedience, than their Saviour's Precept and Precedent."[43]

The Book Of Acts

In the Book of Acts, we see that several times that repentance and/or faith is the prerequisite for baptism which was that what the Great Commission required and implied. Let us begin at the very start.

On the day of **Pentecost,** after Peter preached a sermon through which God brought 3000 souls to Christ, it is said that "those who **received his word were baptized**" (Acts 2:41). No infants were baptized, but only those who received the word preached and heeded the command to be baptized (Acts 2:38) were baptized by water. An explicit statement is made about the subjects of baptism and those are identified as those who received the preaching of the gospel. Everyone was called to receive and believe in the gospel and only they who believed were baptized. They were not merely temporary believers or people who heard a message and at the moment of excitement accepted it. Rather, they are said to have "devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching and the fellowship, to the breaking of bread and the prayers" (Acts 2:42). The joined and committed themselves to the New Covenant community of faith.

Philip went and proclaimed the gospel to the Samaritans and it is said that "when **they believed Philip as he preached the good news** about the kingdom of God and the name of Jesus Christ, **they were baptized, both men and women**" (Acts 8:13). They who believed Philip's preaching and message, they were the same ones who were baptized. But, we have in this instance Simon Magus who was *not* a believer but went on with the crowd and later showed his depravity. Yet, it remains to be that only those who wanted to be baptized and who "believed" the word preached, were baptized. Only professing believers were baptized. Philip did not invite them to be baptized before he could preach the gospel. Neither did he begin baptizing before he could in some way discern that they believed the message. Even when he was deceived, he did not baptize Simon *knowing* that he was a hypocrite.

There is another episode with Philip and baptism. This is the one with the Ethiopian **eunuch.** Philip tells the eunuch "**the good news about Jesus**" (Acts 8:35) and explains the gospel to him from Isaiah (Acts 8:35). The conversation was not shallow and without substance, for it is the eunuch, upon seeing a body of water, who says to Philip, "**What prevents me from being baptized?**" (Acts 8:36). He was so schooled in the doctrine of Christ that he knew baptism to be a necessary step in obedience and the desire came from him. Oh, how I long that this would be the desire of every believer to go into the waters of baptism for their Lord. In this instance again, baptism was only administered to a person who should some fruit of faith.

Then we have **Paul** in chapter 9 who is filled with the Holy Spirit before being baptized (Acts 9:17-18). Paul was saved and then was called upon to symbolize the washing away of his sins by baptism (Acts 22:16). But what cleansed his sins was the "calling on his name" and Christ's precious blood (**see above**).

The **Gentiles** in Acts 10 were first Spirit-baptized and then water baptized. When Peter saw that God had clearly given them repentance leading to life, Peter declared, "Can anyone withhold **water for baptizing these people**, who have **received the Holy Spirit** just as we have?" (Acts 10:47). It seems that Peter thought to have the Holy Spirit was the prerequisite of being "a proper subject" for baptism. Since they have the Spirit, there is nothing to stand in their way and publicly identifying with the Lord in baptism and signifying what the Lord did to them by giving them the Spirit (regeneration).

It is said of **Lydia** that "The **Lord opened her heart** to pay attention to what was said by Paul" (Acts 16:14), and then "**she was baptized, and her household as well**" (Acts 16:15). Sometimes this passage or the example of Lydia's household baptism is used in support of infant or whole household baptism. In all honesty, I find trying to search for support for infant baptism from household baptism texts to be a desperate attempt (but we will deal with household examples below in more detail). The clear implication of the text is that only those were baptized who believed, consistent with what we have seen up to this point from Acts. Some exegetical or lexical argument must be made that a household *must always* include an *infant,* but there is no such thing! There is no mention of her husband or any children, her household would include anyone living under her roof, servants included who also expressed faith, like Lydia, in the message preached by Paul and are called brothers (Acts 16:40).

The **Philippian jailer** is also an example that is sometimes used in support of infant baptism because it is said that "**he was baptized at once, he and all his family**" (Acts 16:33). But this is not correct. Again, an exegetical or lexical

argument must be made that this household or any other included infants in it, but there is none. In fact, the passage about the Philippian jailer is clear. When the jailer asks for the way of salvation, Paul and Silas answer, "Believe in the Lord Jesus, and you will be saved, you and your household" (Acts 16:32). The call to faith is both for him and for his household. Moreover, Luke explicitly mentions that Paul and Silas "spoke the word of the Lord **to him** and **to all who were in his house**" (Acts 16:33). They receive the gospel and then, after washing Paul's and Silas' wounds, the jailer and all his family get baptized at once. Faith preceded the baptism of his entire household and the gospel was preached to all of them. There is not a hint of any infant here, nor that any unprofessing household member being baptized because of "the head of the house" was baptized.

Crispus **believed in Christ along with "his entire household"** as well as many other Corinthians and *then* "**were [they] baptized**" (Acts 18:8). Here we have yet another household baptism in which it is explicitly affirmed that his entire household believed in the Lord. Moreover, in the last part of the verse, when the Corinthians came to faith, it is after they believed that they were baptized. Not before or during. They believed and then they publicly professed the faith in baptism. Strangely enough, I've never seen this "household baptism" used by our paedobaptist brethren with that of Lydia or the Philippian jailer. I wonder why? Is it because the passage so clearly says, "Crispus, the ruler of the synagogue, **believed in the Lord, together with his entire household**"? As in the rest of Acts, we see here again that faith precedes baptism and is a prerequisite for it. The apostles did not baptize households based on the faith of one person. Nor do we have any evidence that these households had infants in them. Furthermore, while it is not often mentioned, yet there is an important difference between *infants* and *children*. We do not deny that children may be baptized, we deny that infants, who are unable to believe and profess the faith, should be baptized. A lot of believers have grown and been taught the Word of God from their youth and God has saved them from their youth. We don't deny that these people the waters of baptism. We deny the waters of baptism to those who cannot profess the faith and cannot understand the gospel.

In **Acts 19**, we have the disciples who had the gospel preached to them by someone who did not mention the Holy Spirit or Christian baptism, and so, when Paul explains to them the baptism of John in which they were baptized, then they get **baptized in Jesus' name** (Acts 19:5) and **received the Spirit by the laying on of hands of Paul** (Acts 19:6). Here we have one of the unique instances in which God did not directly give the Spirit to believers (cf. Eph. 1:13-14), but waited so as to authenticate the apostles. Paul explained to them that the point of John's baptism was to point people to Christ. Paul said, "John baptized with the baptism of repentance, telling the people to believe in the one who was to come after him, that is, Jesus" (Acts 19:4). Therefore, the disciples, upon hearing this, were "**baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus"** (Acts 19:4). They first understood the difference between the baptism of John and of Christ, believed in Christ, and then got baptized. Their faith preceded their baptism.

Clearly, the narrative passages show that only those who received the word and those who were repentant were baptized. This does not mean that there were no false professors. The doctrine of believers' baptism alone does not teach that we can see who is a true believer or not. Rather, all who were and are baptized, are baptized on the basis of their testimony. They profess to have repented and believed in Christ, therefore, they are proper subjects of baptism. If their profession is false, although they were able to deceive us, they did not deceive the Lord. Their condemnation is just.

In summary, the evidence for believers' baptism in Acts is as follows:

Acts	Who were baptized
Acts 2:41	"those who received his word were baptized".
Acts 8:13	They who "believed...[the] good news about the kingdom of God and the name of Jesus Christ".
Acts 8:35-36	The Ethiopian eunuch who had "the good news about Jesus" preached to him.
Acts 9:17-18	Saul, after being "filled with the Holy Spirit...was baptized".
Acts 10:47	The Gentiles "who have received the Holy Spirit".
Acts 16:15-16	Lydia whose heart the Lord opened and her household.
Acts 16:31-34	They who had the word of the Lord spoken to them and believed in God.
Acts 18:8	Crispus, his entire household, and many Corinthians, "believed and were baptized."
Acts 19:4-6	The Ephesian disciples understood the meaning of John's baptism, which called upon the people to believe in Jesus, and then they were baptized.
Acts 22:16	See Acts 9:17-18 above.

The Significance Of Baptism

We have argued above that baptism essentially signifies union with Christ, and is it not appropriate that only those who are *actually* united to Christ, be the subjects of the ordinance? Obviously, we cannot see into people's hearts, but we can listen to what they say and how they live, and on the basis of that baptize them. They may deceive us, but they will not deceive God, and their condemnation is just. But we should not willingly administer the ordinance of baptism to those we have no reason to believe to possess that which is signified—union with Christ. We have no reason to believe that infants have faith or are united with Christ (Total Depravity anyone?). They may, in fact, come to faith when they're older, but as they remain,

we have no reason to believe that they are proper subjects of this solemn ordinance. We see from our Lord's direct commission (Matt. 28:19) as well as practice (John 4:1-2), that discipleship and faith precede public profession in baptism. This is also the exact pattern which His apostles followed in Acts as we have seen.

Could it be said of infants, when baptism is administered to them, that they are united with Christ in his death, are buried with Him in baptism and raised with Him to walk in newness of life (Rom. 6:3-5)? Obviously, we cannot, but that is the significance of baptism. How can anyone be united to Christ without being saved? How can anyone cease being united to Him? We know that nothing can separate those united to Him by faith, unless we believe that we can fall away from faith. We must find a distinct meaning for baptism, which is not true of all who have that ordinance administered to them if we want to maintain infant baptism. There is a certain way and a certain requirement when adult members are baptized and there is a certain way and another requirement for infants to be baptized. This is something never hinted at in the Holy Scriptures. Good paedobaptists would require a profession of faith from adults as any Baptist would. But the precepts and examples of baptism in the Bible are apparently not enough to exclude anything other than believers' baptism.

It is admitted by our Presbyterian brethren that baptism does not save, nor does any infant become a Christian by being baptized. Rather, they enter into the Covenant of Grace in an *external* manner and enjoy its *external* blessings. Strictly speaking, they teach that *because* they are in the covenant, they ought to receive its sign and seal. Yet we deny such membership in the Covenant of Grace. We've spoken about covenant membership in the New Covenant in many chapters and we will speak of it again below.

All who belong to the covenant are regenerated and Spirit-dwelt believers. Church membership does not equal membership in the New Covenant. There are many who are church members, but are sons of perdition and not members of the New Covenant in any way. They may enjoy the blessings of being with believers and under the teaching of the Word of God, but that doesn't make them members, in any sense, of the New Covenant, because I believe that the New Covenant doesn't have multiple ways of membership. They are members of a local church and in a sense part of the community of the people of God insofar as the local church is regarded as "the community of the people of God." But their membership in that community does not place them in the New Covenant. They see the blessings and glories of the New Covenant, yet they have no part in it because it is a spiritual covenant not made with those who are only born of the flesh

The significance of baptism argues for believers' only baptism. The ordinance should be administered only to those who profess to have experienced what the ordinance signifies, regeneration, remission of sins, and union with Christ. A. H. Strong wrote:

> As marriage should never be solemnized except between persons who are already joined in heart and with whom the outward ceremony is only the sign of an existing love, so baptism should never be administered except in the case of those who are already joined to Christ and who signify in the ordinance their union with him in his death and resurrection.[44]

Dr. Wayne Grudem notes that "the outward symbol of *beginning* the Christian life should only be given to those who *show evidence* of having begun the Christian life."[35] Essentially, each of the things which we argued that water baptism signifies, could not be applied to infants, therefore, baptism must mean something very different for infants and for those who profess faith. But about a distinct meaning of baptism for infants only, Holy Writ knows nothing. Therefore, a "baptism" which is not in accord with our Lord's will cannot be a proper baptism.

The Covenantal Argument

Then there is the Reformed Baptist covenantal argument for the proper subjects of baptism. We have very briefly argued above for the understanding that baptism and the Lord's Supper are signs of the New Covenant, therefore, this argument is basically that only those who belong to the covenant should be subjects of its signs. Baptism and the Lord's Supper ought only to be given to those who are in the New Covenant. From a human point of view, we must judge with the knowledge which we have of the person and of the profession of that person whether they belong to the New Covenant or not. But we should not knowingly administer the ordinances and signs of the New Covenant to those we have no reason to believe that they're members of the New Covenant.

While it may sound strange to modern Baptist ears that we make a covenantal argument here for professors baptism, yet the historical evidence is undeniable that this is how our forefathers argued. They did not merely point to the texts in Acts and the order of first believing then being baptized. They certainly did that as we did that. But they also combined this with a rigorous covenantal defense for the subjects from the nature of the New Covenant. They also engaged their paedobaptist brethren on this ground. Both the paedobaptists and our forefathers argued from covenantal grounds. Whether you look at John Spilsbury, John Norcott, Benjamin Keach, Nehemiah Coxe, Hercules Collins, or Thomas Patient, they all incorporated covenantal arguments.

Reformed Baptist in general, both 1689 Federalists and others, hold that the New Covenant is a perfect salvific covenant which has only regenerate, justified, and Spirit-dwelt believers as its members. The New Covenant, unlike the Old Covenant(s), is not a mixed covenant of believers and unbelievers. There are no Isaac's and Ismael's, or Jacob's and Esau's in the New Covenant. The New Covenant consists of only born-again believers. We need to give our reasons for why we think that only believers are part of the New Covenant, unlike the previous Mosaic and Abrahamic covenants which included unbelievers in it. More about the New Covenant, its nature, and membership could be read in **chapter 7**.

The primary and most fundamental text for this position is Hebrews 8:6-13 (**see here**).

> Heb. 8:6-13 But as it is, **Christ has obtained a ministry that is as much more excellent** than the old as **the covenant he mediates is better**, since it is **enacted on better promises**. 7 For if that first covenant had been faultless, there would have been no occasion to look for a second. 8 For he finds fault with them when he says: "Behold, the days are coming, declares the Lord, when **I will establish a new covenant with the house of Israel and with the house of Judah**, 9 **not like the covenant that I made with their fathers** on the day when I took them by the hand to bring them out of the land of Egypt. For they **did not continue in my covenant**, and so I showed no concern for them, declares the Lord. 10 For this is the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel after those days, declares the Lord: **I will put my laws into their minds**, and **write them on their hearts**, and I will be their God, and they shall be my people. 11 And they shall not teach, each one his neighbor and each one his brother, saying, 'Know the Lord,' for **they shall all know me, from the least of them to the greatest**. 12 For **I will be merciful toward their iniquities**, and **I will remember their sins no more**." 13 In speaking of a new covenant, he makes the first one obsolete. And what is becoming obsolete and growing old is ready to vanish away.

We've come to this passage a lot of times in our commentary on the Confession, but I will limit my comments here for the present purpose, namely: who are the members of the New Covenant.

1. Christ is said to obtain a **ministry much more excellent and better** than the ministry of the old Mosaic Covenant. The reason for this is twofold: 1) the covenant He mediates is better, and 2) the covenant is enacted on better promises. With the establishment of the New Covenant in Christ's blood, the Mosaic Covenant is being called "old" and is "ready to vanish away" (v. 13). This ministry which He has received takes place in heaven, in the true Temple of God, not in the type on the earth, but in the anti-type in heaven (Heb. 8:1-2). The ministry of the priests in the Temple in Jerusalem points to the ministry of the true and faithful High Priest in Heaven. The reason that this ministry is better is based on the fact that the covenant, on which this ministry is based, is better. The Mosaic and the New are not the same, but the one is *better* than the other. Each covenant has a different ministry. Moreover, the Lord Jesus is explicitly said to be Mediator only of the New Covenant (Heb. 8:6; 9:15; 12:24). Some Presbyterians suppose that the Lord Jesus was a mediator for the previous covenants also since all the previous covenants were essentially the same as the New Covenant, only different in outward form. But this is wrong. Clearly, in the words "the covenant he mediates is better" is implied that He did not mediate for the old covenant. We will come back later on the mediation of Christ in the New Covenant.

2. The **Old Covenant was broken:** "if that first covenant had been faultless…they did not continue in my covenant". The people were unfaithful to God and broke His covenant. If Jeremiah was referring to any specific instance, the incident with the golden calf would have been a proper episode in Israel's apostasy. Then the meaning would be that the people had been breaking the covenant since the beginning of its establishment. This breaking of the covenant and the disobedience toward God we see in the pages of the Old Testament. They always were a disobedient people and whored after false gods. This covenant included in it both true believers like Moses, and reprobates like Korah; Samuel and Eli's sons; Josiah and Jeroboam, and so on. They were in the covenant because they were children of Abraham, circumcised, and lived in Israel, not because they were true believers. Faith was not a prerequisite for membership in the Old Covenant, rather, ethnicity and the sign of circumcision was. The only requirement in Genesis 17 is that they be males and belong to the household of Abraham. Circumcision had implications as the apostle says (e.g., Gal. 5:3), but an implication is not the same is a requirement or prerequisite. But the New Covenant is said to be "not like the covenant that I made with their fathers". This means then that the New Covenant will be an unbreakable covenant, since it is mentioned that (1) the Old Covenant was not faultless, (2) it was broken and (3) the people were faithless. The New Covenant is unlike the Old, at least in these aspects directly mentioned in this passage. This demonstrates the *newness* of the New Covenant. This is why the New Covenant is a *better* covenant because it is an unbreakable and infallible covenant. This means that apostasy from the New Covenant is impossible. There are no New Covenant members who will end up in hell. There will be a lot of church members in hell, but not a single New Covenant member. For a covenant member to be lost means that Christ was not a perfect Mediator and the New Covenant was, in fact, like the Old Covenant in which a lot of people apostatized from the true God. In summary, the New Covenant is unbreakable, faultless, and its members will, in fact, continue in God's covenant. There is clearly a contrast intended in this passage between both covenants and not merely in the outward things, but in their essence. We have the promise of God that He will ensure that the covenantees will fulfill their obligations. He says, "I will make with them an everlasting covenant, that I will not turn away from doing good to them. And I will put the fear of me in their hearts, that they may not turn from me" (Jer. 32:40).

3. The reason why the New Covenant is better is because of **Christ Who is its Mediator**. Therefore, we need to know a few things about what Christ, as a Mediator, does in this covenant. Christ is the High Priest of God's people Who offered Himself as the sacrifice that atones for their sins. After His work of sacrifice, He entered into Heaven to intercede for His people. As Reformed people, we know that there is a perfect connection between those for whom Christ died (the elect) and those for whom He mediates (the elect). They are the same group. The work of mediation and intercession is the continuation of His sacrifice and is for the same people for whom His sacrifice was offered. He is the Mediator and thus, all who are called of God receive the promised eternal inheritance (Heb. 9:15). He stands between God and man (1 Tim. 2:5) and mediates for His people. The Lord Jesus cannot fail in His mediation and the Father never rejects Him (e.g., John 11:42). Therefore, since He is a Mediator, He must be a Mediator of a particular covenant. Mediators are always mediators based on an agreement or a covenant. The covenant which He mediates is the one established in His blood—the New Covenant. The people on whose behalf He gave His life were His covenant people, those given to Him from all eternity by the Father. He is said to make propitiation for the sins of the people (Heb. 2:17). All His covenant people, for whom He mediates, have their sins propitiated—a satisfaction has been made on their behalf for their sins. The book of Hebrews is thoroughly covenantal. The Lord Jesus is "a forerunner on our behalf" (Heb. 6:19), His people, appearing before God for us. A new hope and a new way has been opened for the people to draw near to God, by the abolishment of the Old Covenant system and replacing it with the New Covenant ministry (Heb. 7:18-19). It is a better hope, because "Christ has obtained a ministry that is as much more excellent than the old as the covenant he mediates is better, since it is enacted on better promises" (Heb. 8:6). The Lord Jesus is said to be the surety of a better covenant (Heb 7:22 KJV). He is the guarantor and the guarantee that the New Covenant is better than the Old. Jesus is the guarantee that the New Covenant is better. The New Covenant is better because of Jesus being its Mediator and High Priest. Because He is everlasting and has an indestructible life, His priesthood according to the order of Melchizedek is permanent and He makes intercession for His people (Heb. 7:23-25). Since He is the surety of the New Covenant, the High Priest Who lives permanently, consequently, He is able to save completely those who draw near to God through Him. The reason? Since He "ever liveth to make intercession for them." The people for whom He made His sacrifice and for Whom He intercedes and mediates are one and the same, and they are all saved because of His sacrifice and intercession which follows His sacrifice. The basis of His mediation and intercession is His sacrifice. We, as Reformed people (I'm speaking both to Presbyterians and Baptists), believe that Christ only died and intended to save the elect, therefore, they only will be saved. But what I'm trying to show from Hebrews is that 1) Christ made a sacrifice for His covenant people, 2) Christ intercedes and mediates on the basis of His sacrifice for His covenant people, and finally 3) Christ is able to save completely those for whom He mediates. Therefore, since we know that it is only for the elect that Christ made His sacrifice, mediates, and makes intercession, that means that only the elect are part of the New Covenant. Christ intercedes and mediates on behalf of everyone in the New Covenant established in His blood because His sheep are those whom He died for—His people whom He came to save (Matt. 1:21). There are no members of the Covenant for whom Christ does not mediate or fails in His mediation. All His covenant people are brought to salvation completely. In Hebrews 9:11-14, Christ is said to enter by His blood into the heavenly Temple and secure an eternal redemption and "purify our conscience from dead works to serve the living God." This serves as the "therefore" that Christ is the mediator of the New Covenant Who gives the called of God the "promised eternal inheritance" (Heb. 9:15). Christ is said to have offered a sacrifice that sanctified the people and perfects all who are being sanctified (Heb. 10:10-14; 13:12). We could go on, but this is enough to establish that the people for whom Christ is the Mediator are His covenant people, and His mediation is perfect which brings people to eternal salvation. In summary, Christ died for His covenant people, Christ intercedes and mediates for His covenant people, and Christ brings all His covenant people to salvation, without losing any.

4. The **blessings of the New Covenant**. Now we go back to Hebrews 8:10-11. The Lord now gives us a description of the New Covenant. He does not promise a new covenant without telling us what it will be. There is a fundamental difference and a new aspect to this covenant which is absent in the others. **(1)** The moral law of God will no longer be on tablets of stone, but it will be on tablets of heart (2 Cor. 3:3). The Law of God will become a part of our nature, it will be written on our hearts and our minds and the Lord will give us the ability and willingness to obey (Ezek. 36:27). This is not said about the other covenants. This is a unique promise of the New Covenant. This is the circumcision of the heart. To be sure, circumcision of the heart is sometimes commanded by God (Deut. 10:16; Jer. 4:4), but it is not granted as part of the Old Covenant. Certainly, believers under the Old Covenant, were circumcised of heart and had the Law of God written on their hearts, but not in virtue of the Abrahamic or Mosaic Covenant, but by virtue of the *retroactive* New Covenant or the Covenant of Grace, which was in promise form before its formal establishment in Christ's blood (**see chapter 8:6** for more on this). The members of this covenant will have the Law upon their hearts and minds, it will be part of their nature, unlike Old Covenant Israel which had the Law merely in stone, and some of them, who were elect and true believers, had the law in their hearts (e.g., Ps. 40:8). **(2)** God being our God and we being His people is not a unique promise for the New Covenant, but part of the Abrahamic as well as the Mosaic covenants. But obviously, this is promise a relative to the covenant in which it is given. Our relationship with God, under the New Covenant, is much greater than the saints of old experienced. We have the completed Scriptures, we have Christ not in the shadows, but in the realities. We have a greater knowledge of God and His Father's heart and so on. Though this is not a unique aspect of the New Covenant, yet the intimacy between the redeemed and God is greater in the New Covenant. It cannot merely be assumed that because the same words of the promise are repeated that they are speaking of the one and same promise. God was a God to all Israel, even unbelievers and they could claim Him as their God, but in a different sense than that which is given here. **(3)** Another unique part of the New Covenant is the fact that there will be no need to teach people, who are part of the covenant, about salvation (knowing the Lord). This obviously does not mean we do not need to study the Bible and learn about God, but rather, the point of Hebrews 8:11 is

more specific, namely, the Israel with whom God will make this New Covenant will all *know Him* salvifically. They will not merely hear about God and know Him among many other gods, but they will know Him intimately and be among His children and elect. That this fact concerns everyone in the covenant is seen in the way that it is described, it is said to be "all shall know me from the least of them to the greatest." Even if there are children in the Covenant, they will know the Lord. The old ones in the Covenant will likewise know the Lord and everyone in between. Everyone who is part of this Covenant knows the Lord salvifically. **(4)** The reason that all the people in the Covenant will intimately and salvifically know the true God is because He will forgive their sins. As we saw above, the Lord Jesus offered Himself as a sacrifice on behalf of His covenant people, for whom also, on the basis of His sacrifice, He mediates and intercedes. All who find themselves in this New Covenant will have their sins forgiven. The blessings of the New Covenant include regeneration, the writing of the Law on the heart and the mind, the salvific and intimate knowledge of God, and the forgiveness of sins.

5. Therefore, on the basis of these considerations, we believe that the membership of the New Covenant, which is the Covenant of Grace established in Christ's blood, is **restricted to the elect alone**. They enter the Covenant by faith when they are regenerated and come to experience its blessings. Since Baptism and the Lord's Supper are signs of the New Covenant, they should be restricted to members of the New Covenant *alone.* All members of the New Covenant are regenerate, Spirit-dwelt believers. We do not have special glasses to see who is truly regenerate and who is not, yet, if we see people professing the Name of Christ and living in His ways, we should not withhold the ordinances from them. They may be able to deceive us, but they will receive their condemnation from God because they cannot deceive Him. We were deceived, but we did not *willingly* and *knowingly* administer the signs of the Covenant to unbelievers. This is in contrast to infant baptism, where we have no reason to suppose the infant is a believer and in contradiction to Scripture where we learn that faith and repentance are a prerequisite for baptism. But we also should keep in mind the covenantal argument, namely, only those who belong to the New Covenant should have the ordinances thereof administered to them, and those who belong to the New Covenant are born-again believers and these *alone.* Not many Baptists have become Baptists because of the "covenantal argument," yet we have our doctrine strengthened and confirmed by it.

Paedobaptist Argumentation

What I'm referring to here are primarily Presbyterian ways of arguing for infant baptism built on the idea of the "single covenant of grace, multiple administrations" view. We've already argued for the invalidity of infant baptism by positively arguing for credobaptism, that is, baptism upon profession of faith. I've also tried to provide a covenantal argument why only regenerate believers should receive the ordinances of the New Covenant, and also that the New Covenant is unlike the breakable Mosaic Covenant.

Children in New Covenant Prophecy

Our paedobaptist brethren still argue the fundamental unity of the covenants in their essence, while we, 1689 Federalists, reject this. I've tried to point out above why the New Covenant is different, and for those interested, take a look at **chapter 7** for more. So the usual "give me a text which excludes infants from the covenant" will not work for two reasons. (1) There is an *essential* difference between the New Covenant and the Old Covenant. (2) The New Covenant consists only of born-again believers who have the Law of God upon their hearts, unlike the Old Covenant. Therefore, unless it could be shown that infants of believing parent(s) have the blessings of the New Covenant and display its fruits, baptism should be withheld from them until they profess the faith and show fruits in keeping with their repentance. The text which shows the difference in how God will deal with His people under the New Covenant is the text on which we base our covenant argument, Jeremiah 31. We could go on to consider texts which use the language of children or seed in the promises concerning the New Covenant, but that will deviate too much from the purpose of this commentary. But let us note a single instance:

> Isa. 54:13 **All your children shall be taught by the LORD**, and great shall be the peace of your children.

The Lord's people are promised restoration not only physically, but also spiritually. The chapter begins with, '"Sing, O barren one, who did not bear; break forth into singing and cry aloud, you who have not been in labor! For the children of the desolate one will be more than the children of her who is married," says the LORD' (Isa. 54:1). What children are these? Are they the children of believing parents regardless of their personal faith? Are they children in the "outward administration" of the covenant? How is this passage interpreted in the New Testament? Thankfully, we don't have to guess:

> John 6:44-47 No one can come to me unless the Father who sent me draws him. And I will raise him up on the last day. 45 It is written in the Prophets, '**And they will all be taught by God**.' Everyone who has **heard and learned from the Father comes to me**— 46 not that anyone has seen the Father except he who is from God; he has seen the Father. 47 Truly, truly, I say to you, **whoever believes has eternal life**.

Notice how the passage in Isaiah is explained by our Lord. He takes it as a reference to those who come to Him, who must be taught by God which means that they were drawn by God to the Lord Jesus. He does not interpret it as a reference to children as the offspring of believers, whether themselves believing or not, rather, He takes it as a reference to all believers as children of God or "children of Zion." In fact, this is also how Isaiah 54:1 is interpreted by the apostle Paul:

> Gal. 4:25-28 Now Hagar is Mount Sinai in Arabia; she corresponds to the **present Jerusalem**, for she is in **slavery with her children**. 26 But the **Jerusalem above** is free, and **she is our mother**. 27 For it is written, "Rejoice, O barren one who does not bear; break forth and cry aloud, you who are not in labor! For the children of the desolate one will be more than those of the one who has a husband." 28 Now **you, brothers, like Isaac, are children of promise**.

Notice that here, Isaiah 54 is interpreted in terms of believers being the children spoken of. They are said to be children of Zion or the heavenly Jerusalem as this text calls them. Therefore, the New Testament provides us a way in which we can understand the reference to children and offspring which the Old Testament speaks of when it prophesies the days of the New Covenant. Children of the flesh will not be in the covenant just because of their parents. Rather, they have themselves to be "children of promise" and children of the Spirit. As Samuel Renihan observes:

> In the New Covenant, **all of God's people will know the Lord**. The people of the **Old Covenant were brought into being through natural generation** within the confines of the offspring of Abraham. In the New Covenant, the people of the covenant are **brought into being by supernatural generation, that is, regeneration**. And **these children know the Lord** because their **supernatural birth grants them faith** in Christ through whom they have confidence and access to God (Romans 5:1-2).[45]

There are a few texts which are often used in support of infant baptism, I will make a brief comment on them and move on to the next paragraph.

Acts 2:39

> Acts 2:38-39 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."

Acts 2:39 is probably the most misused Scripture in the New Testament by paedobaptists. It is really unbelievable how this passage has been misused and is still being misused in favor of infant baptism. Usually, the first part is only quoted, "For the promise is for you and for your children." "Look! This is Old Covenant language, Peter is saying that the New Covenant still holds true for infants!" Well…no. This is not what Peter is saying.

Joel Beeke and Ray B. Lanning, for example, assert from this passage that "The pattern of God's dealings with believers and their children, as old as creation itself, would continue as a constitutional principle of the visible church."[46] After this citation there comes a citation from the Westminster Confession 25:2 concerning the visible church. We've largely spoken of the church in **chapter 26**, so we will not repeat ourselves concerning the distinction between the invisible and visible church. While we can take issue with many things in this citation and in that chapter, let us consider two things: God's pattern and the visible church. There certainly was a pattern for God to keep His covenant going through families, but it is sometimes presented as *the* way that God works, which is overstating the case. It is only from Abraham that the family covenantal principle comes fully into view. Even with Noah, his family was included but so was the whole earth also. Before Noah and between Adam, there was no covenant which was made with "believers and their children." Furthermore, the texts on the New Covenant should be determinative on the nature of the New Covenant and any "pattern." There was a millennia-old pattern of God being worshiped through outward means and sacrifices. But it is clear that this pattern was broken because these pointed to the greater fulfillment in Christ and His covenant.

As to the second issue, the visible church is conveniently brought up in connection with Acts 2:39. But if we read the text, the command, and the promise which is given, why would anyone think it merely concerns the visible church? According to the Westminster Confession, "The visible Church, which is also catholic or universal under the Gospel (not confined to one nation as before under the law), consists of all those throughout the world that profess the true religion; and of their children" (25:2). This is to assume the position before and without trying to establish it. Acts 2:39 does not merely speak of being a church member. But the promise to everyone who repents is that they will be forgiven and given Christ's Spirit. Beeke's and Lanning's chapter is filled with assumptions and unsubstantiated claims.[47]

We've spoken about Acts 2:39 in connection to the relationship between baptism and repentance **above**, but now we will

have to deal with it as it is used by paedobaptists. As we saw in Beeke's and Lanning's citation above, our paedobaptist brethren see the continuation of the "you and your seed" principle. In fact, while they acknowledge the promise concerns that which is mentioned in v. 38, yet 'it is clear that Peter speaks of "the promise" as rhetorical shorthand for the covenant of grace'[48] which in paedobaptist thinking includes believing parents and their children. But this is a simple flattening of the Scriptures and not following the narrative and context of Acts 2. When an equation is made between "the promise" and the Covenant of Grace or Abrahamic promise, then the case of the paedobaptists is concluded before it is argued. But the promise, in fact, is the promise of the Holy Spirit (Acts 1:4; 2:33), which is given to everyone who believes. Concerning this, James Hubner writes:

> The meaning of "the promise" and the phrase "for you and for your children" **refers *not* primarily to the Abrahamic covenant or the covenant of grace**, but to the **specific promise of the Holy Spirit and the "sons and daughters" cited earlier from Joel** (Acts 2:17-21). This fact alone has numerous implications that question the legitimacy of paedobaptist interpretations of the verse. Acts 2:39 is undoubtedly ***related* to the covenant of grace revealed to Abraham** – just as countless other blessings are part and parcel of this broad gospel "preached beforehand to Abraham" (Gal. 3:8). But when priority is given to the original context and primary meaning of the verse, it becomes clear that **Acts 2:39 cannot and should not be *equated* with the covenant of grace**, nor can the specific features of the Abrahamic covenant (e.g., infants receive the sign of the covenant) be forced into the verse and its surrounding context – precisely because **Acts 2:39 is describing a *New Covenant* reality** ("And in the last days it shall be, God declares, that I will pour out my Spirit on all flesh," Acts 2:17).[49]

Through the use of "children," the paedobaptists suppose that infants of believers are here meant and this is in continuation of the Old Covenant pattern established in the Abrahamic Covenant. But is "infants" what is meant here by "children"? I don't believe so. Even the *Presbyterian* Albert Barnes notes that "**To your children -** In Joel, to their sons and daughters, who would, nevertheless, be old enough to prophesy."[6] This is an important point which Barnes mentions and which Hübner has a thing or two to say about:

> It should be obvious that the "**your sons and your daughters**" and "**your old men**" and "**young men**" in Joel 2 ***are* the "you and your children" in Acts 2:39**. Joel 2 predicts a time in the future, and that time has come in Acts 2. He wants to make that point clear, which is why he mentions children again in verse 39. **It is not as if the promise of the Spirit prophesied in Joel only refers to a certain age** or generation of Jewish believers, as if the Spirit would come for a while, and then leave (e.g., the Spirit that came and left Saul and Sampson [*sic*]). Not at all! The **Spirit continues to be poured out from that point of Pentecost forward**, from generation to generation. And it is not as if the promise of the Spirit is only for leaders since it expands to children and even "male and female servants."[50]

The promise of the Holy Spirit stands fast for the old and for the young, but this promise, we must not forget, is to be received by repentance and faith (Acts 2:38), which infants are incapable of. The "children" here does not have to do with age. They can be infants as they can be teenagers or older. The point is that the promise is for the current speakers as well as to all their families and children. But all of them are given the promise with the same condition: repentance and faith. Unless this condition is fulfilled, no one can claim this promise and its blessings. Therefore, if infants are capable of repentance toward God for their sins and faith in Jesus Christ as the means of salvation, baptize them! John Gill notes on this phrase:

> **and to your children**: this is the rather mentioned, because these awakened, and converted souls, were not only in great concern about themselves, for their sin of crucifying Christ, but were in great distress about their children, on whom they had imprecated the guilt of Christ's blood, as upon themselves; the thought of which cut them to the heart, and made their hearts bleed, within them: wherefore to relieve them, and administer comfort to them in this their distress, the apostle informs them, that the promise of Christ, and of his grace, was not only to them, who were now called, but it was also to their children[10]

The nearest historical context for the declaration of God's promise to "you and your children" is "His blood be on us and on our children!" (Matt. 27:25). The apostle is telling them that although they killed the Lord's Christ, they are not hopeless and God is still calling them to Himself through His risen Christ. The reason for the phrase

> **is not because there was any more foederal Holiness or Habitual Faith in those Children of the *Jews*** than in others, for *We all go astray from the Womb, telling Lyes;* but the special Reason why the Apostle thus speaks, was in Answer to their Interrogation, *verse* 37. When they were convinced they had been the Murtherers of the true Christ, they cry out, *Men and Brethren, what shall we do?* The Apostle exhorts them to *Repent and be Baptized, in the Name*

> *of the Lord Jesus, for the Remission of sins, and ye shall receive the Gift of the Holy Ghost:* But methinks **I hear them say unto Peter, but what will become of our Children? for we called for Christs Blood to be upon us and our Childrens Heads, *Mat.* 27. 25**. The Apostle gives them a Plaister as broad as their Sore, and tells them, that **the *Promise is to them and their Children,* if they own that Messiah whom they Crucified**...[51]

Baptism is a sign of the New Covenant and it is given to those who give evidence that they belong to this glorious covenant. It is given for children who are born, but not of the flesh. It is given to those who are born from above. It is not given to those who are children of the flesh, but only the children of the promise have a right to baptism. Concerning Acts 2:41 in this connection, Hübner writes:

> Verse 41 is highly significant for the question as to who should be baptized. Peter has brought up several categories and groups of people in 2:17-21 and 2:39, including "children." But the **final precondition** that was met before any in Peter's audience were baptized **is the receiving of the word**, not social status, Old Covenant status, or the faith of any parent. **"Those who received his word and their children were baptized" is not in the text**, nor would it fit any concept asserted in Acts 2. **Baptism** in Acts 2, in Acts in general, and in *all* the New Testament **is consistently associated with repentance and faith.** Furthermore, as Conner argues, **when Peter specifically says "for you and your children" he "does not have specifically Christian parents in mind**, but all Jews in general...**This rules out any notion of making this promise apply just to Christian parents.**"[52]

The ones who were baptized on the day of Pentecost are explicitly said to be the ones who "received his word" (Acts 2:41). Nothing is said of infants, children, unprofessing wives, or husbands. Rather, the point is that this promise is always available to you and to your posterity on the condition of repentance and faith in the crucified and risen Messiah. In fact, we should consider who the audience of the promise is. Why is it assumed that the promise is to believing parents and their children? The promise and the sermon was given to *unbelieving* Jews. Unbelieving Jews are as much objects of this promise as believing Christians. But no one can claim this promise unless they meet the conditions of faith and repentance. Furthermore, why is this promise limited only to our children? In fact, if we want to keep it in the spirit of the Abrahamic Covenant, *all* our posterity and anyone considered to be in our household should receive this promise and be baptized (according to the paedobaptist argument). Children in this passage as well as in other passages often denotes posterity in general and not only one generation. The promise to Abraham was that "I will establish my covenant between me and you and your offspring after you throughout their generations for an everlasting covenant, to be God to you and to your offspring after you" (Gen. 17:7). The promise does not merely concern Isaac, but everyone descended from Abraham can claim this promise (**see here** for more on this). In the same way, paedobaptists who use this line of reasoning, should baptize everyone in the West since at one time or another they must have had Christians in their genealogy regardless of personal faith. No confession of faith was necessary for Abraham to circumcise his slaves or for any child or parent in Israel. This would be the most consistent application of the Abrahamic principle. But this would obviously be against the nature of the New Covenant.

The next group is the "far off", which are the Gentiles. This is seen from Ephesians 2:13 where they are so designated. The gospel came to the Gentiles through Peter in chapter 10 and they were baptized after they received the Spirit (Acts 10:44-48). This promise is available not only to Jews but also to Gentiles. There is a beautiful prophecy in Zechariah which speaks of "those who are far off shall come and help to build the temple of the LORD" (Zech. 6:15). The Gentiles along with the Jews will help to build the temple of God because they have become one in Christ. They are "being joined together" and growing "into a holy temple in the Lord" (Eph. 2:21; 1 Pet. 2:5).

Then there is the controlling clause which, as Dr. James White often says, we as Calvinists should directly recognize and see the sovereignty of God in it: "everyone whom the Lord our God calls to himself" (Acts 2:39). This is the controlling phrase in Acts 2:38-39. It is also the limiting phrase for the identification of "you and...your children and...all who are far off". It is God Who calls His people to Himself. They do not call themselves, but it is God Who effectually calls them to salvation by His Spirit. The "you", the "your children" and the "far off" who will, in fact, receive the promise of the Holy Spirit are the ones whom "the Lord our God calls to himself." This is the controlling phrase in the passage by which we may know what is meant by "you and for your children and for all who are far off". This is the powerful call of God by which we are born again. This call of God is "by his Word and Spirit, out of that state of sin and death in which they are by nature, to grace and salvation by Jesus Christ; enlightening their minds spiritually and savingly to understand the things of God; taking away their heart of stone, and giving unto them a heart of flesh; renewing their wills, and by his almighty power determining them to that which is good, and effectually drawing them to Jesus Christ" as our Confession says (10:1; identical in Westminster 10:1). It is not an outward call merely. But it is a powerful and regenerating work which ingrafts one not merely in an outward visible membership, but into the heart of the New Covenant and the invisible church.

We do not deny that, often, children raised in Christian homes come to faith early on. Some get baptized before adulthood, I do not see a problem in that. But the fact is, they get baptized because they show signs of faith and signs of repentance, not

because their parents are Christian and not because of a theology of "covenant children." They get and they should get baptized because they are believers. The parents and the elders should see if it's proper to baptize young people, but this is very different from baptizing an infant who knows nothing of the gospel on the basis of their parents' faith. Baptism, in the New Testament, is an expression of one's own faith (e.g., 1 Pet. 3:21, **see also above** on its significance).

It is interesting that this controlling clause, which restricts those who are called from the "you", the "your children" and the "far off", is treated as non-existent by an eminent exegete as John Calvin, although he is so bold to declare that "This place, therefore, doth abundantly refute the manifest error of the Anabaptists, which will not have infants, which are the children of the faithful, to be baptized, as if they were not members of the Church."[20] No, brother John, it does not refute the Baptists, but now you know better. All the attempts to support infant baptism from this passage are vain. The signs of the covenant, baptism and the Lord's Supper, are to be administered only to those "whom the Lord our God calls to himself" and have repented of their wicked ways (as the Supper is given to those who were baptized in Acts 2:42). Hübner writes:

> The reason why **baptism** (and not circumcision) **is a sign of new life** (Col. 2:12), **forgiveness** and cleansing from sin (Acts 22:16, 1 Pet. 3:21), and being **identified with Christ** (Rom. 6:3-4; Col. 2:10-14) **is precisely because those who are to be baptized have been regenerated** (Heb. 8:11), **forgiven** (Heb. 8:12), and **united to Christ**. That is, **those who are in the New Covenant** (believers) are to **receive the sign of the New Covenant (baptism)**. Such was never the case in the Old Covenant – whether with Abraham's descendants/servants (Gen. 17:23) or in the Mosaic economy – since the **sign was given *regardless* of spiritual status**.[53]

There is a history, old and new, of the paedobaptist misuse of this passage and it should stop when we listen to what the passage, in its context, says without importing our theological presuppositions to it.[54] We close with a famous quotation from Paul Jewett on Acts 2:39:

> Whether we think of Peter's listeners or of their children or of those far removed from the immediate scene of this first Christian *kerygma*, the point is that the promise is to all whom God shall call. This fact puts the whole matter on a rather different theological axis from that which is traditionally assumed in the interest of infant baptism. It becomes no more a question of one's natural birth, as paedobaptists have often implied; there is nothing in this Scripture passage of "visible church membership" and "external covenant privilege." Rather, the passage is concerned with the call of God, that inner work of the Spirit...The **Paedobaptist ear is so attuned to the Old Testament echo in this text** that **it is deaf to its New Testament crescendo**. It fails to perceive that **the promise is no longer circumscribed *by birth* but by the call of God**.[55]

Household Baptisms

This is what I called above a desperate attempt at finding support for infant baptism. There are four household baptism texts, three we noted above in Acts and one in 1 Corinthians, which are used by our paedobaptist brethren to argue for infant baptism.

1. Cornelius and his household (Acts 10:43-48);
2. Lydia and her household (Acts 16:14-15);
3. The Philippian jailer and all his family (Acts 16:31-34);
4. The household of Stephanas (1 Cor. 1:16).

It is to be noted that in none of these texts is there any hint of any infants. That is simply read into the narrative. There is no lexical or theological argument that a household *must* include infants. In all respect, paedobaptists who use this sort of argument for infant baptism (though Christ be my witness that I love them as brothers and sisters), I find to be desperate to find support in the Bible for an *unbiblical* doctrine. The paedobaptist household argument is that when the head of a house comes to faith, the whole household follows his decision and gets baptized. Therefore, the argument, if consistently applied, would not only include infants, but older children and servants, too. Abraham's household included Eliezer (Gen. 15:3), 318 men born in his house (Gen. 14:14), his wives obviously, and "all the men of his house, those born in the house and those bought with money" (Gen. 17:27). In other words, anyone under his authority and connected to him. There is not a single indication that when Abraham circumcised the males in his household that he required a profession of faith from them. But if paedobaptists would use this household principle according to its Abrahamic application, then they would have to baptize anyone and everyone under a household head's authority without requiring a profession of faith. In other words, children, as well as adult offspring, would have to be baptized and considered in the covenant based on this household principle. But this is not the practice of our paedobaptist brethren.

Furthermore, baptism is a positive and sovereign institution of the Lord Christ. This means that it is to be dictated and administered according to the explicit commands of its Institutor. We may not rely on shaky grounds and unfounded and

inconsistent consequences. Abraham did not circumcise his males because he received the promise from God. Abraham circumcised his males because the Lord commanded him to do so: "Every male among you shall be circumcised" (Gen. 17:10). Abraham was not free to go from consequences and devise ways to please God. Benjamin Keach explains that baptism

> **cannot be their Children's right without Authority or Command from Christ**: for if we should grant all our Brethren say concerning *Abraham*'s Seed, and of their Children's being in Covenant, this will not justify their Practice of baptizing them, if they argue thus till Dooms-day, **except Christ hath left them a Precept, or his Church a Precedent so to do**; for ***Abraham*'s Seed, though they were such a thousand times over, had no right to Circumcision until he received the word of Command to circumcise them from the great God**. Nor had *Lot,* and other godly Men in that day, any right to that Ceremony who were not of *Abraham*'s Family, because God limited his Command to himself, his Sons, and Servants, or such who were bought with Money, and so came into his House.[56]

Paedobaptists often too quickly dismiss the positive evidence for believers' baptism as the only baptism permissible. But as the command of the Great King is stated and as we have examined it, He commanded only His disciples to be baptized. He did not command His disciples *and* their children to be baptized. Therefore, if He did not command it, then it is unfounded and a false way of worshipping Christ. But now we move to consider the household passages in the book of Acts.

1) **Cornelius** and his household are said to have the Spirit fall upon them before being baptized (Acts 10:46-47). In fact, it is interesting to observe what Peter says, "Can anyone withhold water for baptizing these people, who have received the Holy Spirit just as we have?" The apostle Peter points to the baptism of the Holy Spirit as the ground for them to be baptized in water. Therefore, all who were baptized were true believers and there is no mention of infants or children who were baptized on the basis of another's faith. Furthermore, here, like in Acts 16:31, salvation is promised to Cornelius and his household. The angel which was sent to Cornelius told him, "Send to Joppa and bring Simon who is called Peter; he will declare to you a message by which **you will be saved, you and all your household**" (Acts 11:13-14). Salvation is not promised simply because Cornelius, as the head of the house, would believe. Rather, salvation is promised on the same ground for him as for all his household: by believing the message which will be preached. Then we have the account when they received the Holy Spirit and thus were saved, and afterward were baptized as a testimony to their great salvation.

2) **Lydia's** heart was opened by the Lord and she and her household were baptized. There is nothing said about a husband, or even children (let alone *infants).* Moreover, in Acts 16:40, those who belonged to Lydia's household are called "brothers", a term which Christians did not simply throw around. Paul distinguishes between those who are brothers and walk according to their profession and them who are "false brothers" (e.g., 1 Cor. 15:11; 2 Cor. 11:26; 2 Thess. 3:6; Gal. 2:4). In fact, there is reason to believe that Lydia was a single woman. Paul Jewett, for example, observes:

> **Nothing in this passage [Acts 16:13-15] implies that Lydia was a married woman with nursing children**, for **she traveled some 300 miles from her native city** and felt at liberty, **as head of the house**, to invite men into her home. Since Luke speaks of ***her* household** being baptized, and the importunity with which she constrained the apostles to abide in *her* house, **no mention being made of her husband**, the most likely hypothesis is that she had no husband. In any event, there must have been other adults in **her household – domestics, friends, business associates who were led by her example to confess their faith with her in baptism**.[57]

3) Everyone in the house of the **Philippian jailer** hears the gospel and then gets baptized (Acts 16:32-33). Moreover, he rejoices with his family that he had believed in God (Acts 16:34). Salvation is offered to the jailer as well as to everyone in his house on the same condition: "Believe in the Lord Jesus." I. Howard Marshall notes:

> The New Testament takes the unity of the family seriously, and **when salvation is offered to the head of the household, it is a matter of course made available to the rest of the family group**... It is, however, offered to them **on the same terms**: they too have to hear the Word (16:31), believe and be baptized; the **jailer's own faith does not cover them**.[58]

Sometimes, the argument is made from this text that the focus is only on the jailer's faith. For example, Bryan Chapell notes:

> Luke says that *all* of the jailer's household was baptized (v. 33), but then he uses a *singular* verb to describe who rejoiced and believe in God that night (v. 34). The jailer himself believed (singular verb), and his whole house was baptized. Sadly, this important distinction in the account is not reflected in some of our modern translations (see the

English Standard Version for an excellent translation). As a result, some assume that entire households were baptized in the New Testament because everyone in them believed the gospel. While this is not impossible, it is unlikely that all those households consisted only of those who were old enough to make an intelligent faith commitment. Further, the assumption that everyone in those households must have made a faith commitment does not take notice of the careful distinction that Luke makes between those who actually believed and those who were baptized.[59]

Is Chapell trying to make the point that unbelievers were baptized simply because the head of the house believed and was baptized? The promise of salvation was made to him as much as it was made to his household. But the condition of believing counts for him as well as his whole household. The promise is not, "Believe in the Lord Jesus, and you will be saved and your household will be included in the visible church or covenant community." If we would follow the kind of use of this passage and promise, then we will have to say that when the head of a house comes to faith then his whole household is also saved eternally, not merely become a part of the "visible covenant community." The promise to him is that of eternal salvation and becoming part of the invisible church. But the condition for him as well as for his house is the same: "Believe in the Lord Jesus." Even the Presbyterian Albert Barnes observes that "salvation was offered to his family as well as himself, implying that if they believed they should also be saved."[6]

Everything in this passage points to the fact that everyone in the house believed the message. First of all, Paul and Silas "spoke the word of the Lord to him and to all who were in his house" (Acts 16:32). The jailer is again put first here because he was the main character in this narrative with his suicidal thoughts which he had. But it does not say that they only "spoke the word of the Lord to him," but also to everyone of his household. Therefore, they heard the means through which they could be saved. Second, the passage continues with the focus on the jailer still: "Then he brought them up into his house and set food before them. And he rejoiced along with his entire household that he had believed in God" (Acts 16:34). His rejoicing is also in the singular, but the passage makes it clear that "he rejoiced along with his entire household". Or are we to say that his household rejoiced with him that he left their gods while they remained idolaters?

We do not merely "assume that entire households were baptized in the New Testament because everyone in them believed the gospel" it is the express testimony of Scripture. In all of the accounts in the book of Acts, we don't get the slightest idea that "There may also have been times when household members objected to being baptized."[60] While paedobaptists claim household baptisms were normative in the New Testament, they ignore the fact that these accounts make it clear that these households consisted of believers.

4) There is nothing said in connection to infants being in the household of **Stephanas**. It is said of them in 1 Corinthians 16:15, "you know that the household of Stephanas were the first converts in Achaia, and that they have devoted themselves to the service of the saints". They were all believers who demonstrated the genuineness of their faith by their service to the saints.

None of these texts gives any support for infant baptism, for there is not an indication in any of them of any infants present. Nor is there evidence of people being baptized on the basis of another's faith. But all who were present believed and that was the basis for their baptism, consistent with the pattern in the rest of Acts. The Appendix attached to the Confession dealt thus with household baptisms:

> The arguments and inferences that are usually brought for, or against Infant baptism from those few instances which the Scriptures afford us of whole families being baptised; are only conjectural; and therefore cannot of themselves, be conclusive on either hand: yet in regard most that treat on this subject for Infant baptism, do (as they conceive) improve these instances to the advantage of their argument: we think it meet (in like manner as in the cases before mentioned so in this) to shew the invalidity of such inferences.
>
> Cornelius worshipped God with all his house, the Jaylor, and Crispus the chief ruler of the Synagogue, believed God with each of their houses. The houshold of Stephanus addicted themselves to the Ministry of the Saints: so that thus far Worshipping, and Believing runs parallel with Baptism. And if Lydia, had been a married person, when she believed, it is probable her husband would also have been named by the Apostle, as in like cases, inasmuch as he would have been not only a part, but the head of that baptised houshold.[29]

The appendix mentions an interesting case, namely, that of Crispus and his household. I have never yet heard of Crispus's household baptism used as support for infant baptism. Why might that be? Maybe because of what the text actually says:

> Acts 18:8 **Crispus**, the ruler of the synagogue, **believed in the Lord, together with his entire household**. And many of the Corinthians **hearing Paul believed and were baptized**.

Let us briefly note two things in this passage. First, an emphasis is laid by the Holy Spirit upon the fact that not only Crispus

as an individual but “together with his entire household” believed in the Lord. The description is more comprehensive than in the other instances of household baptisms. May we now simply because of the phrase “entire household” assume that he must’ve had infants there? If everyone in this household is said to have “believed in the Lord”, why not also in the other households? Secondly, the second part of the passage mentions the pattern of baptism in the New Testament: faith and then baptism. The Corinthians heard the preaching of Paul, believed, and then they were baptized. Therefore, here again, we see faith functioning as a prerequisite for baptism.

The only way we can find support for infant baptism in these texts (Acts 10:43-48; 16:14-15; 16:31-34; 1 Cor. 1:16) is if we come to the texts with the presupposition of infant baptism. Keach summarizes the household baptism texts:

> Moreover, in the tenth of the Acts we find *Cornelius* and those with him were **first made Disciples by *Peter*’s preaching**, and the **Spirit’s powerful Operation**, and **then were baptized** (Acts 10:45, 47-48); “*Who can forbid Water* (saith he) *that they should not be baptized, who have received the Holy Ghost as well as me? And he commanded them to be baptized in the Name of the Lord Jesus*”; that is, by the Authority of Christ according to the Commission (Acts 16:31-33). So in Acts 16 when the poor trembling **Jailor was made a Disciple, *i. e.* did believe with his whole House on the Lord Jesus Christ**, he was with **his whole House baptized**; so “***Lydia believed*** and was **baptized**” (Acts 16:14), the like in Acts 18, Crispus “*believing on the Lord, and many of the* Corinthians *hearing, **believed**, and **were baptized***” (Acts 18:8).
>
> The **Chief Ruler believed with all his House** and **were baptized**, he believed, his House believed, the Jailor believed, all runs in their believing, all must by believing be made Disciples, or not be baptized.[61]

1 Corinthians 7:14

> For the **unbelieving husband is made holy** because of his wife, and the **unbelieving wife is made holy** because of her husband. Otherwise **your children** would be unclean, but as it is, they **are holy**.

This passage is often used to claim that children of even one believing parent are federally holy, and therefore, they are entitled to baptism. They are holy because they are born in the church and in the Covenant of Grace is the usual claim. Since they are born within the outward administration of the Covenant of Grace, they are entitled to its initiation sign, baptism. For example, Bryan Chapell says that “Few verses of Scripture more forcefully indicate that God communicates his grace to children while they are in the household of a covenant parent.”[62] Mark E. Ross explains ‘that the New Testament regards the children of believing parents as “holy” in an important sense, namely, that they have standing within the covenant that God made with Abraham. If baptism is the sign of that covenant in the New Testament, having the same meaning that circumcision did in the Old Testament, then surely the newborn infants of believers in the New Testament are just as entitled to receive the sign of covenant membership as their predecessors were in the Old Testament.’[63] This is a perfect summary of the paedobaptist argument from 1 Corinthians 7:14.

But here is nothing said about baptism or covenant membership, nor in the entire chapter/context. Moreover, this is a notoriously difficult text with many differing interpretations. I do not claim to have a perfect grasp on it. I believe this *holiness* to be not *internal* holiness, but the *external* influence of a Christian and the “holiness” which is determined by the subject at hand: the marriage of a Christian and a non-Christian. God will bestow His blessing upon them for the sake of the Christian, much like God did for Joseph when he was in Egypt (Gen. 39:5). The children will have the influence of their Christian parent(s) and be taught in the things of God, and in this way, they will be *separate* (which is the basic meaning of “holy”). Furthermore, they are legitimate or “holy” because they are the offspring of a lawful marriage (which we will explore in more detail below). There is nothing said here about New Covenant membership or that children receive its blessings. Dr. Ross acknowledges as many good paedobaptists do that having the children declared "holy" does not mean that they are saved. Neither does them being members of the covenant/church. We’ve taken issue with the last statement when we explored the covenantal basis for credobaptism. But covenantal holiness is far away from the mind of the apostle in this passage.

From the various interpretations which this passage has received, I favor **the legitimacy interpretation** which our forefathers often referred to as **matrimonial sanctification** (e.g., Keach). It is interesting to note the comments of the great Presbyterian commentator, Alber Barnes on this passage. First, he says what this “holiness” does *not* mean:

> (1) That the unbelieving husband would become holy, or be a Christian, “by the mere fact” of a connection “with” a Christian, for this would be to do violence to the words, and would be contrary to facts everywhere; nor,
>
> (2) That the unbelieving husband had been sanctified by the Christian wife (Whitby), for this would not be true in all cases; nor,
>
> (3) That the unbelieving husband would gradually become more favorably inclined to Christianity, by observing its

effects on the wife (according to Semler); for, though this might be true, yet the apostle was speaking of something then, and which rendered their children at that time holy; nor,

(4) That the unbelieving husband might more easily be sanctified, or become a Christian, by being connected with a Christian wife (according to Rosenmuller and Schleusner), because he is speaking of something in the connection which made the children holy; and because the word ἁγιάζω hagiazō is not used in this sense elsewhere.[6]

Right after this, he adds something which is beneficial to all Scriptural interpretation:

> But it is a good rule of interpretation, that the words which are used in any place are to be limited in their signification by the connection; and all that we are required to understand here is, that the unbelieving **husband was sanctified "in regard to the subject under discussion;"** that is, in regard to the question **whether it was proper for them to live together, or whether they should be separated or not**. And the sense may be, "They are by the marriage tie one flesh. They are indissolubly united by the ordinance of God. As **they are one by his appointment**, as they have **received his sanction to the marriage union**, and **as one of them is holy, so the other is to be regarded as sanctified**, or made so holy by the divine sanction to the union, that it is **proper for them to live together in the marriage relation**." And in proof of this, Paul says if it were not so, if the connection was to he regarded as impure and abominable, then their children were to be esteemed as illegitimate and unclean.[6]

If the union of the man and woman was unlawful, then their children would likewise be unlawful. In other words, if their marriage was no marriage in the eyes of God, then their children would be outside of wedlock and thereof out of fornication. While this is commonplace in our Western culture, to the mind of the biblical authors, this is a sin and an uncleanness. The apostle in this place argues that it, in fact, was a lawful marriage in the eyes of God. Therefore, their children are likewise lawful and holy in *this sense*. If their union was unlawful, for example, out of wedlock, then their children would likewise be unlawful. The apostle argues from the holiness of the children to the holiness of the marriage. If the children were unclean, then the marriage would likewise be unclean. But since the children are holy, so is the marriage also. This is the issue at hand. The question does not concern the place of children in the "covenant community" or the church. The question is about the marriage of an unbeliever and a newborn Christian.

Barnes explains that the children are "Holy in the same sense as the unbelieving husband is sanctified by the believing wife; for different forms of the same word are usual. That is, they are legitimate. They are not to be branded and treated as bastards, as they would be by your separation. You regard them as having been born in lawful wedlock, and they are so; and they should be treated as such by their parents, and not be exposed to shame and disgrace by your separation."[6]

Let's take a look at the context. The subject at hand in 1 Corinthians 7 is marriage. The apostle begins in 1 Corinthians 6:12 with his section on sexual immorality and moves in chapter 7 to discourse about marriage. The question which troubled some believers was, "Is God pleased with my marriage to my unconverted spouse?" The discussion was not concerning getting married to an unbeliever, but *remaining* married to an unbeliever. The former is clearly forbidden (1 Cor. 7:39; 2 Cor. 6:14), but the latter is said to be lawful. In vv. 12-13, Paul lays out the answer to the problem which the Corinthians faced, namely: if the unbelieving party wants to remain in the marriage, the believer should stay in the marriage with them. Then comes the passage which we are discussing. The apostle desires to assure the Christian spouse that they are not living in sin or idolatry because their spouse is in sin or idolatry. The relationship that the Christian wife has with her unbelieving husband and the Christian husband with his unbelieving wife is legitimate and not sinful. It is a real marriage. To close the discussion, in vv. 15-16, the apostle tells the Christian spouse that they are called to freedom and thus if the unbelieving spouse wants to separate, they are allowed to separate. The initiative should come from the unbelieving party to separate and not from the Christian! In v. 16, the apostle adds another motivation for the Christian party to separate if the unbeliever wants it, namely, they have no assurance that their unbelieving spouse would convert because of them.

From this short look at the context, we see that the *legitimacy* of the marriage is *the* discussion at the hand. It would be helpful for us to take a look at the Old Testament/Covenant and how it handled marriages with unbelievers. These intermarriages were clearly forbidden on the grounds that they would lead the Israelites to idolatry (Ex. 34:11-12, 16; Deut. 7:3-4). But the discussion at hand in 1 Corinthians 7 is not about establishing marriages with unbelievers, but maintaining these. Thus, what did the Old Testament say about marriages already established with unbelievers? Well, Ezra 9 and Nehemiah 9:2; 13:23-28 are clear that they should separate from their non-Israelite wives *and children* (Ezra 10:2-3). Under the Old Covenant, the children of mixed marriages were unclean, but this is no longer the case under the New Covenant by the express argument of the apostle. The Christian spouse does not regard their children to be unclean, i.e., born out of wedlock, therefore, they should likewise not regard the marriage which produced them as unclean or illegitimate. This is the sense given to the word "holy" in this particular context, namely, that the unbelieving spouse and the children are legitimate and clean. There is a place in Paul where the word "holy" is used in such a sense, namely, 1 Timothy 4:3-5:

1 Tim. 4:3-5 who forbid marriage and **require abstinence from foods that God created to be received with thanksgiving** by those who believe and know the truth. 4 For **everything created by God is good**, and nothing is to be rejected if it is received with thanksgiving, 5 for **it is made holy** by the word of God and prayer.

This simply means that the food which these false teachers forbad, was good because it was created by God and is to be received with thanksgiving because it is made clean or "holy" by consecration to God. In the same way, the marriage to the unbeliever is made holy by the presence of the Christian. Therefore, the children coming out of such a marriage are also holy just like the unbelieving spouse. For example, Keach points to Malachi 2:15 as a use of the holiness concept in reference to legitimate children. He says, "And as for the use of the word Holy for Legitimate, that it is in this sense used else-where in the Scripture is evident from Mal. 2:15 where a Seed of God, or a Godly Seed, can be understood in no other sense than that of a lawful Seed, in opposition to those born by Polygamy."[64] The great Baptist commentator, John Gill, produces passages from the Jews where the word or concept of sanctification/holiness is used for marriage, and then comments:

the true sense and even the right rendering of the passage is this: "for the unbelieving husband is espoused to the wife, and the unbelieving wife is espoused to the husband"; **they are duly, rightly, and legally espoused to each other**; and therefore ought not, notwithstanding their different sentiments of religion, to separate from one another; otherwise, if this is not the case, **if they are not truly married to one another, this consequence must necessarily follow; that the children born in such a state of cohabitation, where the marriage is not valid, must be spurious, and not legitimate**, and which is the sense of the following words:

else were your children unclean, but now are they holy; that is, if the marriage contracted between them in their state of infidelity was not valid, and, since the conversion of one of them, can never be thought to be good; then the children begotten and born, either when both were infidels, or since one of them was converted, must be unlawfully begotten, be base born, and not a genuine legitimate offspring; and departure upon such a foot would be declaring to all the world that their children were illegitimate; which would have been a sad case indeed, and contains in it another reason why they ought to keep together; whereas, as the apostle has put it, **the children are holy in the same sense as their parents are; that as they are sanctified, or lawfully espoused together, so the children born of them were in a civil and legal sense holy, that is, legitimate**; wherefore to support the validity of their marriage, and for the credit of their children, it was absolutely necessary they should abide with one another. The learned Dr. Lightfoot says, that the words "unclean" and "holy" denote not children unlawfully begotten, and lawfully begotten; but Heathenism and Christianism; and thinks the apostle alludes to the distinction often made by the Jews, of the children of proselytes being born in "holiness", or out of it, that is, either before they became proselytes or after; but it should be observed, that though the word "holiness" is used for Judaism, yet not for Christianity; and besides, **the marriages of Heathens were not looked upon as marriages by the Jews, and particularly such mixed ones as of a Jew and Gentile, they were not to be reckoned marriages**; for so they say {y},

"he that espouses a Gentile woman, or a servant,
□□□□□□□ □□□□, "they are not espousals"; but lo, he is after the espousals as he was before the espousals; and so a Gentile, or a servant, that espouses a daughter of Israel,
□□□□□□□ □□□□□□□□ □□□, "those espousals are no espousals";''

nor do they allow children begotten of such persons to be legitimate. This learned writer himself owns such a tradition, and which he cites {z},

"that a son begotten in uncleanness is a son in all respects, and in general is reckoned as an Israelite, though he is a bastard, □□□ □□□□ □□□□□ □□ □□□, "but a son begotten on a Gentile woman is not his son";''

all which are just the reverse of what the apostle is here observing; and who, it must be remarked, is speaking of **the same sort of holiness of children as of parents, which cannot be understood of Christianity, because one of the parents in each is supposed to be an Heathen**. The sense I have given of this passage, is agreeable to the mind of several interpreters, ancient and modern, as Jerom, Ambrose, Erasmus, Camerarius, Musculus, c. which last writer makes this ingenuous confession formerly, says he, **I have abused this place against the Anabaptists, thinking the meaning was, that the children were holy for the parents' faith; which though true, the present place makes nothing for the purpose**: and I hope, that, upon reading this, everyone that has abused it to such a purpose will make the like acknowledgment; I am sure they ought.[10]

Taking note of the Old Testament and Jewish background is necessary for the right understanding of this passage and its implications for mixed marriages. The usual paedobaptist use of this passage sees a federal or covenantal holiness in the children of at least one believing parent. It is interesting to note, as Stan Reeves does, "Although Murray, Calvin, Henry, Hodge, Marcel, Sydenham, and Poole all make the argument for covenant status of the child from the passage, none of them seem to recognize that this implies covenant status for the unbelieving spouse too."[65] His observation about the identical holiness between the unbelieving spouse and the children is likewise important. He says, "Any attempt to distinguish the

sanctification of the unbelieving spouse from the holiness of the children is necessarily an exercise in eisegesis rather than exegesis. Nothing in the passage suggests that these two concepts differ, and the language itself and the proximity of the terms is a strong argument that they are the same." If the paedobaptist reading is taken into its logical conclusion then it says too much. For, the passage does speak of children as infants, but the scope is broader in the sense of offspring. In other words, these children can also be adults or teenagers or infants. If this holiness is covenantal, then they are also said to be in the covenant *regardless* of their faith and age. But this is a conclusion which our paedobaptist brethren will not acknowledge. W. Gary Crampton observes that "if this verse is permitted to teach about the baptism of a child born to a Christian parent, then the baptism would not be limited to infants. Grown children (even covenant breakers) should be baptized, as well as infants, because the verse does not speak of infants as such. In point of fact, the argument for infant baptism found in 1 Corinthians 7:14 says too much."[66]

There are privileges connected to children being born and raised by godly parents, but these are not connected to them being engrafted into the New Covenant unless they are reborn. Errol Hulse observed:

> To be born into a Christian family is to be born into an environment of blessing. To be born into or to be **adopted into such a family is to be sanctified in the basic meaning of that term. To be sanctified simply means to be set aside or apart**. Hence the unconverted partner in a marriage is set apart. He is sanctified only in the sense that God takes into account the fact that he or she is joined in life to a believer. That does not mean that that person is holy in the converted sense. **1 Corinthians 7:14 expressly states the case of the unbelieving partners, "they are holy."** Their lives are the very opposite of holiness. **It is their position of being set apart that is acknowledged**. Now the same applies to all children born into a Christian family. To be born into the arena of New Covenant living...is to be privileged indeed. That is why the word sanctified or holy is used in 1 Corinthians 7:14. **As baptism is not warranted in the case of the unbelieving partner so it is not warranted with unbelieving children**.[67]

Answering the old-and-tired objection that "if Children may not be baptized, this makes the Privilege of Believers Children under the Gospel less than was theirs under the Law," Benjamin Keach explains the privileges under the New Covenant for our children:

> Now though all these outward Privileges are gone, yet our Privileges being more spiritual, are greater both to ourselves and Offspring; **they looked for Christ to come as held forth under many dark Types and Shadows, we are assured he is come and has accomplished** what was foretold of him, "*We behold in the Glass of the Gospel as with open face the Glory of the Lord*" (2 Cor. 3:18)*;* all those Types are explained and spiritualized to us, *viz.* Circumcision, the Worldly Sanctuary, Tabernacle, the Candlestick, Table, Shew-bread, Cherubims, Mercy-seat, *&c.* which things and many more were Figures for the time then present, and were **Shadows of good things to come**, but **the Body or Substance of them is Christ**, who hath put an end to them, and **must we now needs find out some other carnal or external Rites to come in the room or stead of these or some of these, or else think our Privileges are less than theirs?** whereas indeed our Privileges it appears are enlarged, and far greater than theirs were, and hence they longed many of them to see those things that we see, *&c.* Instead of being a fleshly Nation we are a *holy Nation,* a *holy City,* a *spiritual* and *holy Temple,* a *Royal Priesthood,* and *holy* (not carnal) Church-Members; *Church-Members* by *Regeneration* not by *Generation,* not by the *first Birth,* but by the *new* and *second Birth;* if we and our Children have not the same Privileges don't let us complain, whereas **God hath been more rich and bountiful to us, we and our Children sit under the clear and glorious Revelation and Ministration of the Gospel**, can we or ours be losers by this Change? Alas! as far as Christ excels *Moses* and *Aaron,* the Gospel the Law, the Antitype the Type, the spiritual Birth the carnal, the extent of all Nations the Confines of *Judea;* so far, saith one **are we better and not worse, and our Privileges not lesser but far greater; our Children have great advantages in having such Parents and Ministers to instruct them**, to pray for them, and to set before them a good Example; besides, as soon as capable, they with others have the Gospel preached clearly to them, and Grace offered and tendered universally to all far and near, with "*Ho, every one that thirsteth, come ye to the Waters*" (Isa. 55:1), &c. The Spirit also is in a glorious manner communicated, to enable them and others to believe now in the Gospel-days. The Law was hard, "*Do this, and live*"*;* and **Circumcision laid them under a Bond to do and keep all that God in his Law required**, yea and under a Curse if "*they continued not in all things that were there enjoined*" (Deut. 27:26; Gal. 3:10), which brought them into miserable Bondage and Captivity; but now 'tis but to "*believe, and thou shalt be saved*"*: "the Spirit*" saith, the Scripture "*was not yet given*"—to wit, in that manner nor measure as afterwards, "*because Christ was not yet glorified*" (John 7:39).[68]

It cannot be in any way honestly claimed that children of believing parents are less privileged because they have no carnal privileges under the New Covenant which cannot benefit them spiritually. Our children and even unbelievers who live among believers, are more privileged in hearing Christ-crucified than the most privileged people under the Old Covenant. Our forefathers have been answering the same paedobaptist objections that Reformed Baptists are still dealing with.

Finally, it is interesting to note that Barnes the paedobaptist himself does not subscribe to the usual interpretation of this passage (although he adds Doddridge's interpretation of it at the end of his comments on this verse). He says:

> ...**I believe infant baptism to be proper and right**, and an inestimable privilege to parents and to children. But a good cause should not be made to rest on **feeble supports, nor upon forced and unnatural interpretations of the Scriptures**. And such I regard the **usual interpretation placed on this passage**.[6]

Although we disagree that infant baptism "to be proper and right," yet we agree with our brother that 1 Corinthians 7:14 is a feeble support for infant baptism, and a forced and an unnatural interpretation.

No Command Is Needed

Our paedobaptist brethren will often say that no command is needed for infants to be baptized since we have a command in the Old Testament for infants to be circumcised. Well, this would equate circumcision with baptism and the Old Covenant with the New Covenant, which we have sought to differentiate above (see our discussion on Col. 2:11-12 **here**). But another interesting objection is raised, which, until I read Hercules Collin's *Believers Baptism From Heaven,* didn't know that it was such an old objection. Basically, it says that we do not have a command or example of women partaking of the Lord's Supper, but we administer to them the Lord's Supper. Therefore, can't we use the same reasoning to baptize infants?

These are two different things. First of all, we have clear examples and commands of baptizing those who have professed the faith. While on the other hand, there is neither precept nor example to be found in the New Testament of infant baptism. Second, the significance of baptism, as given in the New Testament, necessitates its subjects being professing believers, which infants are not. Third, in the case of the Lord's Supper, while we have the narrative of the institution of the Lord's Supper being composed of 13 men, yet we have no reason to exclude women from the Lord's Supper, as we do for infants. This is a silly objection and an attempt at seeking justification for paedobaptism. Here is how Collins dealt with this objection:

> *There is no express command for Womens receiving the Lord's Supper, yet there may be good Consequences to prove it lawful; so of Infant Baptism.*
>
> *I Answer.*
>
> Who will say there's no Command for Women's communicating, so long as that stands upon Record, 1 *Cor*. 11. 8. But *let a Man examine himself, and so let him eat?* The Learned do know the original word signifieth *Man or Woman*. The Apostle saith, *There's one Mediator between God and Man*; the word signifieth *Man or Woman, Male or Female, all one in Christ*; it is the same word with the former in the Orginal.
>
> Moreover, we read of Women who believed and were Baptized, *Acts* 8. 12. so are fitly qualified for the Lord's Table. We have also an Example of Women's communicating: in *Act* 1.13,14. we read, *Mary*, and other Women, with the rest of the Disciples, were altogether. And in *Act*. 2.44. it's said, *all that believed were together*; and in *ver*. 42. *these continued stedfastly in the Apostles Doctrine, and in Fellowship, and in breaking of Bread, and in Prayer*. So that here is a Command and an Example for Womens communicating, tho none for Infants Baptism, therefore the Objection is false and weak.[69]

We should observe the basic teaching of the Regulative Principle of Worship, which Reformed churches are supposed to hold: Only that which is commanded and has precedence in the Word of God, ought to be done in worship. If it is absent, it is forbidden. If it is commanded, it ought to be done. There is no hint of infant baptism in the New Testament, therefore, it is forbidden. Even the so-called covenantal arguments for infant baptism do not stand up to Scriptural scrutiny, therefore, there isn't even a precedent for infant baptism. Furthermore, if such reasoning for consequences is allowed, then those who follow these consequences should practice paedocommunion though thankfully the majority of Reformed paedobaptists do not follow that practice. This is a "blessed inconsistency." It is, though, a scriptural inconsistency for baptism and the Lord's Supper are linked together in Scripture. Those who are entitled to baptism are also welcomed to the table. For example, after the cherished passage which paedobaptist lay a claim to (Acts 2:39), we read:

> Acts 2:41-42 So those who **received his word were baptized**, and there were added that day about three thousand souls. 42 And they devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching and the fellowship, to **the breaking of bread** and the prayers.

There is a link in this passage between those who believed, were baptized and devoted themselves to the blessings of the New Covenant, including the Lord's Supper (**see here** for this designation). The same "they" (1) received the word, (2) were

baptized, (3) were added to the church at Jerusalem, (4) were devoted the means of grace including celebrating the Lord's Supper. We will leave you here with Hercules Collins' strong criticism of this paedobaptist inconsistency:

> **Why are Children denyed the Lords supper if fit for baptism?** what, are Children believers, and kept from the Lord's Table? do we ever read it was denied to a true Believer? what, are Children New Creatures, Regenerated, Born again, and deny them the Elements of Bread and Wine: Oh! hard Father of Infants **Men as wise as your self gave Infants the Eucharist for several hundred years**, from some of your own Topicks, and will you deny it them? all your long harangue about Infants being capable of one Ordinance, and not of another, is but wind; will you say in the Ordinance of the Lord's Supper, there must be inherent Grace, and also Grace exercised; but a state of Grace, tho not exercised, say you, is sufficient for Baptism; But how doth this Gentleman know Infants are in a state of Grace to qualifie them for Baptism? The word doth not help him here, and if he conclude so from Charity, then there is the same reason to have the same Charity for Children of Unbelievers, and more too some times, because the **Believers Child often falls from a pretended Covenant, State, Faith, Inherent Holiness, New Birth, Regeneration**, when the Unbelievers, Child abides in all Truly...**I do Assert what ever is Sealed to a Believer in one Ordinance, is Scaled to him in another**; nay, there is more particular words of Incouragement added unto Baptism, than to the other: 'Tis true, 'tis all comprehended in this, *This is my Body broken for you, and my Blood shed for the Remission of your Sins*, but for Baptism in *Acts* 2. you have the promise of *Remission of Sins and gift of the Holy Ghost*: in *Acts* 22. 'tis said *to Wash away Sins Symbolically*, Mark 16. *Salvation is annexed unto Faith and Baptism*; the Lord's Supper, was never so Dignified as Baptism by the Procession of the Holy Ghost; and it is a Symbol of *Regeneration* and *Justification*, Rom. 6. Do I see my Sins Pardoned, my Person Justified, God Reconciled, my Person Sanctified, Heaven assured at the Lord's Supper? **I behold the same in Baptism**, there I see my Sins Buried in his Grave, as in the other Nailed to his Cross; here I behold my Soul Washed in his Blood, Justified by his Righteousness, Saved by his Death; and is not this a Marriage Feast? And ought I not to have the Wedding Garment now as at the Table of the Lord?[70]

God's Initiative and Parental Vows

I've attended Reformed infant baptisms while I went to church with my now-wife. Reformed churches here in the Netherlands read the form for infant baptism wherein all the arguments which we tried to refute above are presented with the regular texts. In this ceremony, infant baptism is presented as something which comes from God and which displays God's initiative for saving man. For example, the *Form for the Administration of Baptism* says:

> And although our young children do not understand these things, we may not therefore exclude them from baptism, for as they are without their knowledge, partakers of the condemnation in Adam, so are they again received unto grace in Christ; as God speaks unto Abraham, the father of all the faithful, and therefore unto us and our children (Gen. 17:7), saying, "I will establish my covenant between me and thee, and thy seed after thee, in their generations, for an everlasting covenant; to be a God unto thee, and to thy seed after thee."[71]

This is the typical argument which we hear from our brethren and which we have tried to engage. After the citation above, Acts 2:39 and the example of Christ with the little children are also called upon. Paedobaptists often argue that infant baptism best shows God's initiative to call man to Himself in that a child is helpless and cannot do anything, yet God calls them to Himself. In fact, as the Form says, without their knowledge they are "received unto grace in Christ" just like they were condemned without their knowledge in Adam. Therefore, infant baptism, supposedly, shows the initiative of God in calling man. The Form even speaks of these children being "received unto grace in Christ." This kind of language is deeply covenantal and theological. Without reading the rest of what Reformed paedobaptists say we would have to conclude that they believe that children are regenerated in baptism. But Reformed paedobaptists do not believe that. Yet, this kind of language is miles off from "they share in the outward administration of the covenant" or "they share in the outward privileges of the church." It takes New Testament language speaking of believers and applies them to non-believers. Are children born to Christian parents less depraved than others? The reason infant baptism began being practiced is because people started to believe that baptism forgave original and actual sin. But Reformed writers reject this heresy. What does it mean to speak of children being "received unto grace in Christ" without saying that they are under grace and no longer in the state of sin? What happens when these children grow up and die as unbelievers? Has the grace of God failed? It would seem so. But paedobaptists and the Form are quick to acknowledge that

> Whereas in all covenants, there are contained two parts: therefore are we by God through baptism, admonished of, and obliged unto new obedience, namely, that we cleave to this one God, Father, Son, and Holy Ghost; that we trust in him, and love him with all our hearts, with all our souls, with all our mind, and with all our strength; that we forsake the world, crucify our old nature, and walk in a new and holy life.[71]

Baptism, therefore, represents God's covenant with us. In sense, the covenant is confirmed in our baptism. We have no problem in speaking this way as we did **above** on 1 Peter 3:21. But this is exactly a covenant that infants cannot fulfill. What "new obedience" is an infant obliged to? In fact, it becomes clear that this is more for the parents than for the children. There are paedobaptists and credobaptists that have problems with "child dedication." We will not concern ourselves with that, but I point to it merely because the paedobaptist criticism essentially is that it is a "dry baptism." A "child dedication" is, essentially, parents presenting their children to the Lord vowing to raise them in His ways. On the other hand, the New Testament presents baptism as a personal decision reflecting personal transformation and obligation. This is also a point of paedobaptist criticism. For example, Mark E. Ross says:

> Does baptism signify that one has made a choice and a commitment to be a disciple? Or does it signify that the one who is baptized is bound in duty to be a disciple? To understand baptism as a sign of our commitment to discipleship is to turn a sign and seal of God's covenant into a human pledge or badge of commitment.[72]

But a human pledge or commitment is exactly the sense given of baptism in 1 Peter 3:21 as the paedobaptist William Perkins acknowledged (**see above**). Our baptism is "an appeal to God for a good conscience" (ESV, NASB), or "the pledge of a good conscience toward God" (HCSB, NET, NIV). We do not become man-centered when we simply acknowledge that Scripture speaks of baptism as an act of faith by the believer. Nor do we thereby minimize the grace of God for in baptism we picture the death, burial, and resurrection of our Lord, which is our only hope in life and death.

When the apostle Paul uses the image of baptism in Romans 6, he uses it to make something clear to the Romans, namely that they should be dead to sin because they pictured that in their baptism. On the basis of their baptism, they should adopt a different lifestyle. Baptism lays obligations upon them. So also in Galatians 3:26-29 being children of Abraham, in Christ and baptism are connected. In Colossians 2, Paul points to the greatness of Christ and His work on our behalf, even in circumcision us, so that he can say, "Therefore let no one pass judgment on you in questions of food and drink, or with regard to a festival or a new moon or a Sabbath…If with Christ you died to the elemental spirits of the world, why, as if you were still alive in the world, do you submit to regulations" (Col. 2:16, 20). Baptism is called upon here to demonstrate its consequences, namely, of living a life honoring to God just as we pledged at our baptism.

At this point, we take issue with the parental vows at an infant's baptism. After the explanation of infant baptism and prayer, the Form turns its attention to the parents before doing the "baptism." First, they are questioned whether they "acknowledge, that although our children are conceived and born in sin, and therefore are subject to all miseries, yea, to condemnation itself; yet that they are sanctified [My children. Ezek. 16:21. They are holy. I Cor. 7:14.] in Christ, and therefore, as members of his Church ought to be baptized?" Then they are asked whether they acknowledge the doctrine contained in the Old and New Testaments as well as the articles of the Christian faith. In other words, whether they consent to the teaching of the church. Thirdly and lastly, "Whether you promise and intend to see these children, when come to the years of discretion (whereof you are either parent or witness), instructed and brought up in the aforesaid doctrine, or help or cause them to be instructed therein, to the utmost of your power?" This is what parents promise in a "child dedication," too. But baptism is an expression of one's own faith and one's pledge to God. Yet here we see that the focus shifts to the parents and their duties. What is promised is good and is the duty of every godly parent. But baptism is not the place or the ordinance for a parental vow. For example, Bryan Chapell writes that "The baptism of an infant is the first public testimony of parents that they will trust and follow God in the raising of their child. As an act of devotion, the baptism sets the family on the path of blessing that God promises to those who walk in their ways."[73] In the same book, Daniel M. Doriani explains what "wise parents tell their children about their baptism":

> **We baptized** you when you were little, too. **We promised** to raise you to trust Jesus. The pastor put water on your head. We use water for washing, and when we baptized you, **we asked God** to wash away your sins. The pastor said "In the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit" for you, too. That means that he asked God to be your God. Now you belong to him. We all want you to believe in God for yourself, but baptism means that you are never all by yourself. See how the family always comes to baptisms and how the whole church is there? Our family came, too, and we pray for you. The people of the church care for you, too. We teach you and pray for you, so you will belong to God all of your life.[74]

In this way, infant baptism becomes focused on parental vows and obligations, rather than the internal change in one's life. In the words of Chapell, baptism becomes the public testimony of the parents rather than the baptized person. Normally this would also be the public testimony of an adult baptized person in a Reformed church, but since it is obvious that infants can't answer for themselves, it becomes the public testimony of parents. It should be clear that this is contrary to the teaching of the New Testament on baptism.

We do not question the motives of our brothers and sisters. What they desire and vow is godly and should be imitated. But baptism is not given for that purpose. Baptism is "to be unto the party baptized, a sign of his fellowship with him, in

his death and resurrection; of his being engrafted into him; of remission of sins; and of giving up into God, through Jesus Christ, to live and walk in newness of life" (paragraph 1).

Conclusion

We have seen that the fundamental foundation for Westminster infant baptism is the "one covenant, multiple administrations" model of Covenant Theology. We disagree and offered a brief positive case for "elect and regenerate only membership" of the New Covenant (for more see various paragraphs in **chapter 7** and **chapter 26**). We took a look at a few passages which our brethren use to support infant baptism and found them to be vain attempts producing no results. We also took a brief look way in which it is administered to children, the God's initiative argument and the role of parents. Therefore, since we have the supposed support for infant baptism out of the way, this gives all the more support for the biblical position to baptize professing believers alone as Christ commanded us.

---

§3 In The Name Of The Father, Son, and Holy Spirit

3. The outward element to be used in this ordinance is water, wherein the party is to be baptized, **1** in the **name of the Father,** and of **the Son,** and of **the Holy Spirit.** **2**
    1. Matt. 3:11; Acts 8:36, 38; 22:16
    2. Matt. 28:18-20

The outward element into which we are baptized **is water, wherein** (Acts 8:38) we are baptized and not merely *by* which. We are dipped in the water and go into the water, and not merely baptized *with* water. Christian baptism is Trinitarian baptism **in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit** as the Lord Jesus commanded us (Matt. 28:19).

Water

Water is the element into which we are baptized. Water was used by John and in the same way, water was used by the apostles in the book of Acts. This is how the word baptism is frequently used in the New Testament. Unless we have other reasons, we should always understand baptism to be in water. This is the usual element into which a person or a thing was dipped, as that the Greek word *baptizo* was used, which we will examine in the next paragraph,

The Baptismal Formula

We are to use the full formula of baptism as given by Jesus when He said: "baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit" (Matt. 28:19). Baptism in the Name of the God Triune shows that we belong to Him. John Frame observes, "To be baptized into the name of someone is to belong to that person. Cf. 1 Cor. 1:13, 15; 10:2."[75] We identify with this Triune God and we show, through our baptism, that we belong to Him. John Norcott wrote, "And surely it is one Reason, why Baptism is special is to be administered in the Name of the Father, Son, & Holy Ghost; because he who doth sincerely believe, and is baptized, the whole Trinity, the Father, Son and Spirit is his portion; and that glorious Union of the Trinity in Christ's Baptism, is in every Believers Baptism commemorated."[76]John Dagg explains that '"*into* the name of," makes it signify the new relation into which the act brings the subject of the rite. He is baptized into a state of professed subjection to the Trinity. It is the public act of initiation into the new service.'[77] Everett Ferguson explains:

> The Greek phrase "into the name of" (εἰς τὸ ὄνομα) occurs mainly in commercial or legal documents and carries the idea of "into the ownership or possession" of someone. The Hebrew phrase "into the name of" (□□□□□□) carries the idea of "with reference to," defining the intention or purpose of the act, or even in some instances "in worship to." A Hebrew background has greater probability with reference to Matthaean usage, but the practical results may not have been greatly different. Something done by a person as an act of worship toward another brought the first person into a relationship of belonging to the object of the act, and someone whom a person belonged or was obligated received acts of homage from that person.[78]

Therefore, the Trinitarian formula which is spoken at our baptism expresses the fact that God claims us as His own and also that we are obliged to honor, worship, and serve this great trinitarian God.

It is quite interesting that the full, trinitarian baptismal formula is not repeated in the book of Acts. Rather, what we have are people being baptized in:

- in the name of Jesus Christ (Acts 2:38; 10:48);
- in the name of the Lord Jesus (Acts 8:16; 19:5).

We should notice that in none of these passages do we have a declaration of "and they were baptized in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit." So, what went wrong? Nothing went wrong. None of these passages present a baptismal formula. We read in none of these passages a citation of what the apostles actually *said* at the time of baptism. We don't read of Peter or Paul saying, "I baptize you in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ," rather, what we have is a declaration that people were identified with the Lord Jesus, Whom their leaders rejected and crucified. The Lord Jesus was the stumbling block. Thus when the apostles called the people to be baptized in His name, they were calling them to receive the One they rejected and identify with Him. They baptized them based on the authority of the Lord Jesus and on behalf of the Lord Jesus, this is what these expressions mean. Keep this in mind: In none of these passages is a baptismal formula given. We only have one baptismal formula given and that is in Matthew 28:19. In none of these Acts passages do we have a quotation of what the apostles actually said at the time of baptism, therefore, we have every reason to believe that as the Lord taught them, so did they. They baptized "in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit." Therefore, the only baptismal formula should be used which was given at the institution of that ordinance (Matt. 28:19). We have a command from the Lord Himself to baptize in the Triune Name.

---

§4 Baptism By Immersion

4. **Immersion**, or **dipping** of the person in water, is necessary to the due administration of this ordinance. **1**
    1. 2 Kings 5:14; Ps. 69:2; Isa. 21:4; Mark 1:5, 8-9; John 3:23; Acts 8:38; Rom. 6:4; Col. 2:12; Mark 7:3-4; 10:38-39; Luke 12:50; 1 Cor. 10:1-2; Matt. 3:11; Acts 1:5, 8; 2:1-4, 17

Immersion, or dipping which is the going of the person baptized **in water, is necessary to the due administration of this ordinance**. The **due** or proper administration of baptism is only by **immersion, or dipping** since that is both what the word means and what the example in the New Testament whereby a mode may be discerned testify.

Baptists are known to argue that baptism should be (1) administered to professing believers alone (paragraph 2) and (2) should be by immersion. Therefore, this surprisingly short chapter, which forms part of the framers' identity on a subject which divided them from their Presbyterian and Congregationalist brethren, closes by insisting that immersion is the only proper way that baptism is administered.

Before we begin our examination of the verb *baptizo* which is used to speak of Christian baptism, we must note also the verb βάπτω (*bapto,* G911). *Bapto* is used only three times in the New Testament (Luke 16:24; John 13:26; Rev. 19:13). It is used 19 times in the LXX. Its basic meaning is '"to plunge," "to dip" in a yielding medium, usually a liquid. From this basic sense comes a use that emphasizes the result, "to wet."'[79] Ferguson examines various writings to determine and demonstrate the meaning of the word. Interestingly, *baptō* was also used metaphorically for dyeing. Ferguson explains, "Since a common practice was to dye by dipping an object in the coloring agent, a secondary meaning of *bapto* was "to dye," and this meaning almost replaced the primary meaning."[80]

The Meaning Of *Baptizo*

It is generally agreed among scholars that the basic meaning of the Greek verb βαπτίζω (*baptizo*, G907) is "to immerse." It is used 64 times in the New Testament, while only two times in the LXX (2 Kgs. 5:14 ["dipped"]; Isa. 21:4 ["overwhelms"]) in contrast to the use of *bapto*. Since everyone agrees that *baptizo* certainly includes the meaning of immersion, those who do not practice immersion, in our case, Reformed paedobaptists, seek to find several ways to underscore this point, either by pointing to passages where *baptizo* means something other than immersion (**we will look at those passages**) or trying to find a theological reason for immersion not being necessary. Wayne Grudem says that "to plunge, dip, immerse…is the commonly recognized and standard meaning of the term in ancient Greek literature both inside and outside of the Bible."[81] Let us look at how various lexicons define the verb.

Everett Ferguson, in his book *Baptism in the Early Church*, takes great pains to examine various usages in Greek literature (secular and biblical) to determine the meaning(s) of *baptizo*. He first notes the relationship between *bapto* and *baptizo*.

> The -ίζω form tended to replace βάπτω, in accord with the tendency in languages for strengthened forms of words

> to replace the root form and to lose their intensified meaning, in this case a **development likely related also to *bapto* being ordinarily used for "to dye."** Where there was a difference, ***baptizō* involved a more thorough and lasting submersion** than *baptō*. In some cases **βαπτίζω refers to a condition of being under or surrounded** (covered) by something (usually a liquid) regardless of the action that brought about the state of condition (as, for example, when the sea flows over a ship or person). This is especially so in the metaphorical uses. Ordinarily the word refers to **being placed in the object that covers**, but however the condition occurs, the result is the same — being covered or overwhelmed. [82]

That the primary meaning of *baptizo* is submersion or immersion is that it was often used of ships being sunk. In fact, in some instances *baptizo* and sinking were put next to each other and thus clarifying what is meant by *baptizo*.[83] Words like pour or sprinkle cannot possibly describe a vessel being surrounded by water, but immersion and plunging surely can. Sometimes they spoke of being immersed "to the waist" because "the usual usage was for complete submerging"[83]. Concluding the survey on the literal usage, Ferguson explains that "Since being under water was associated with drowning or sinking, many of the uses of βαπτίζω are in a context of (potential) destruction, but destruction does not inhere in the word itself, as is shown by the metaphorical uses."[84] Since *baptizo* is a normal word, we should expect that it also has a metaphorical or secondary meaning. The metaphorical meaning had to do with "being overwhelmed" by things. For example, Isaiah 21:4 in the LXX says "My heart wanders, and transgression overwhelms [βαπτίζει] me; my soul is occupied with fear" (LXXE). These metaphorical usages are not against the literal sense of the word. For, "In these figurative uses the point of comparison is not the manner of application of the element that overwhelms but the completeness of the effect or result. The use of *baptizō* does emphasize a total submersion, in the metaphorical sense no less than in the literal."[85]

Mounce's *Complete Expository Dictionary of Old & New Testament Words* says that 'The verb *baptizō* literally means "to put or go under water," although it has several different sense.'[86] And also "*to dip, immerse; to cleanse* or *purify by washing*".[87]*Vine's Expository Dictionary of New Testament Words* notes on this *baptizo:*

> "to baptize," primarily a frequentative form of *bapto*, "to dip," was used among the Greeks to signify the dyeing of a garment, or the drawing of water by dipping a vessel into another, etc. Plutarchus uses it of the drawing of wine by dipping the cup into the bowl (*Alexis*, 67) and Plato, metaphorically, of being overwhelmed with questions (*Euthydemus*, 277 D).[88]

Strong's Definitions says "to immerse, submerge; to make whelmed (i.e. fully wet); used only (in the New Testament) of ceremonial ablution, especially (technically) of the ordinance of Christian baptism".[89] *Joseph Thayer's Greek Definitions* says (G907):

> 1. to dip repeatedly, to immerse, to submerge (of vessels sunk)
> 2. to cleanse by dipping or submerging, to wash, to make clean with water, to wash one's self, bathe
> 3. to overwhelm[90]

The *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament* gives the basic meaning of *baptizo* and the root *bapto:*

> The Meaning of ***baptō* and *baptizō*.** *baptō*, "to dip in or under," "to dye," "to immerse," "to sink," "to drown," "to bathe," "wash." The NT uses *baptō* only in the literal sense, e.g.,, "to dip" (Lk. 16:24), "to dye" (Rev. 19:13), and *baptizō* only in a cultic sense, mostly "to baptize."[91]

A. H. Strong provides a few citations from lexicons and people about the definition of *baptizo:*

> Liddell and Scott, Greek Lexicon: "βαπτίζω, to dip in or under water; Lat. immergere." Sophocles, Lexicon of Greek Usage in the Roman and Byzantine Periods, 140 B. C. to 1000 A. D.—"βαπτίζω, to dip, to immerse, to sink ... There is no evidence that Luke and Paul and the other writers of the N. T. put upon this verb meanings not recognized by the Greeks." Thayer, N. T. Lexicon: "βαπτίζω, literally to dip, to dip repeatedly, to immerse, to submerge, ... metaphorically, to overwhelm.... βάπτισμα, immersion, submersion ... a rite of sacred immersion commanded by Christ." Prof. Goodwin of Harvard University, Feb. 13, 1895, says: "The classical meaning of βαπτίζω, which seldom

occurs, and of the more common βάπτω, is dip (literally or metaphorically), and I never heard of its having any other meaning anywhere. Certainly I never saw a lexicon which gives either sprinkle or pour, as meanings of either. I must be allowed to ask why I am so often asked this question, which seems to me to have but one perfectly plain answer."

In the International Critical Commentary, see Plummer on Luke, p. 86—"It is only when baptism is administered by immersion that its full significance is seen"; Abbott on Colossians, p. 251—"The figure was naturally suggested by the immersion in baptism"; see also Gould on Mark, p. 127; Sanday on Romans, p. 154-157. No one of these four Commentaries was written by a Baptist.[92]

It is to be noted that if what God wanted to communicate was baptism by pouring or sprinkling, there were words available for those things, but not once used for baptism! Wayne Grudem, in a footnote, writes:

If any New Testament author had wanted to indicate that people were sprinkled with water, a perfectly good Greek word meaning "to sprinkle" was available: *rhantizō* is used in this sense in Heb. 9:13, 19, 21; 10:22; see BAGD, p. 734.[93]

There is also a word for pouring, ἐκχέω (*ekcheo*, G1632) which is used 28 times in the New Testament, but never of water baptism. It is used of the (out)pouring of the Spirit (Acts 2:17, 18, 33; 10:45), but not water baptism.

At this point, we may even note the various washings in the Old Testament and how they were carried out. Most notably, *baptizo* is used in the account of Naaman dipping himself 7 times in the Jordan (2 Kgs. 5:14). At this point, Ferguson explains:

The Greek translation uses λούω ("wash yourself," λοῦσαι) for Elisha's command with the promise that he would be purified (καθαρισθήσῃ), but βαπτίζω (he immersed [or dipped] himself," ἐβαπτίσατο) for his compliance with the command. It will be noted in the discussion of Christian usage that "wash" (λούω) often was understood as equivalent to "baptize" (βαπτίζω) and was carried out by a dipping.[94]

The other references to dipping use the word *bapto*. As to the distinction between the various words used, we note the following passages from the Law:

Num. 19:17-20 And they shall take for the unclean of the burnt ashes of purification, and they shall **pour** [ἐκχεοῦσιν] upon them running water into a vessel. 18 And a clean man shall take hyssop, and **dip it into** [βάψει εἰς] the water, and **sprinkle it upon** [περιρρανεῖ ἐπὶ] the house, and the furniture, and all the souls that are therein, and upon him that touched the human bone, or the slain man, or the corpse, or the tomb. 19 And the clean man shall **sprinkle** [περιρρανεῖ] [the water] on the unclean on the third day and on the seventh day, and on the seventh day he shall purify himself; and [the other] shall **wash** [πλυνεῖ] his garments, and **bathe** [λούσεται] himself in water, and shall be unclean until evening. 20 And whatever man shall be defiled and shall not purify himself, that soul shall be cut off from the midst of the congregation, because he has defiled the holy things of the Lord, because the **water of sprinkling** [ὕδωρ ῥαντισμοῦ] has not been **sprinkled** [περιερραντίσθη] upon him; he is unclean.

Lev. 14:6-8 And as for the living bird he shall take it, and the cedar wood, and the spun scarlet, and the hyssop, and he shall **dip** [βάψει] them and the living bird into the blood of the bird that was slain over running water. 7 And he shall **sprinkle** [περιρρανεῖ] seven times upon him that was cleansed of his leprosy, and he shall be clean; and he shall let go the living bird into the field. 8 and the man that has been cleansed shall **wash** [πλυνεῖ] his garments, and shall shave off all his hair, and shall **wash** [λούσεται] himself in water, and shall be clean; and after that he shall go into the camp, and shall remain out of his house seven days.

Lev. 14:15-16 And the priest shall take of the cup of oil, and shall **pour** [ἐπιχεεῖ] it upon his own left hand. 16 And he shall **dip** [βάψει] with the finger of his right hand [into] some of the oil that is in his left hand, and he shall **sprinkle** [ῥανεῖ] with his finger seven times before the Lord.[95]

It should be clear now that the authors of the New Testament possessed every word possible to denote various ways for administering water to the body. But the Holy Spirit chose the word *baptizo* to describe the Christian rite of initiation. Had the Lord Christ wanted His disciples to go into the world and *sprinkle* His disciples, then He had the word ῥαντίζω (*rhantizo*, G4472) available to Him. Had He wished to the rite to be administered by pouring then He could have chosen the word ἐκχέω (*ekcheo*, G1632).

It is obvious that the basic meaning of the verb *baptizo* is neither sprinkling nor pouring, but immersing and dipping. An interesting side-fact is that the Greek Orthodox Church's infant baptisms happen by dipping, and the same goes for the Armenian Church. When I was an infant, I was dipped thrice into "holy water". Isn't it interesting that the Greek Church practices baptism by dipping? I guess they understand the import of the word. Baptism by pouring and sprinkling is by all admission the easiest and quickest to administer. It does not require a lot of water and you can do it wherever you are. You do not need a pool or to go into a river. My wild guess is that the reason that the Greek Orthodox Church practices baptism by dipping, is because they understand what the word *baptizo* means.

The basic meaning of the word *baptizo* or as transferred into English, baptize, is to dip, immerse, or plunge into water. Therefore, baptism by immersion is the only acceptable way of administering this ordinance. Considering the **Regulative Principle of Worship**, this is the way that we are commanded to administer this ordinance of Christ, therefore, this is the way we should do it—by immersion.

Counter Examples

Sometimes, a few examples are raised in which paedobaptists try to lessen the force of the word's definition and to argue that *baptizo* actually doesn't mean immersion. Louis Berkhof writes:

> In Judith 12:7 and Mark 7:3,4 we cannot possibly think of dipping. Neither is this possible in connection with the following passages of the New Testament: Matt.3:11; Luke 11:37,38; 12:50; Rom. 6:3; I Cor. 12:13; Heb. 9:10 (cf. verses 13,14,19, 21); I Cor.10:1,2. Since the word *baptizo* does not necessarily mean "to immerse," and because the New Testament does not in any case explicitly assert that baptism took place by immersion, the burden of proof would seem to rest on the Baptists.[96]

It is perfectly possible to think of dipping and immersion in *all* these passages. Moreover, we should note that an exception does not overthrow the rule. We've noted metaphorical usages above, but they still retain the idea of the literal meaning. We have seen that virtually all lexicons give *baptizo* the basic meaning of "to dip, to immerse, to wash" and the like, therefore, even if an instance could be produced in which *baptizo* cannot possibly mean dip or immerse, still, this does not overthrow all the other instances, or change the primary definition of the word. It seems to me so contrary to Reformed thought to seek another, non-prescribed way of administering the ordinance. It is clear and admitted by all lexicons that the basic and fundamental meaning of *baptizo* is to immerse, to dip and to plunge into water. Yet we read various Reformed brethren who practice infant baptism, who try to argue against the basic meaning of the word in an attempt to justify different modes of administering this ordinance. Only that which is commanded and has a warrant in the Word of God should be done, and it is obvious both from the meaning of *baptizo* and how baptism is described in the New Testament (as we will see below) that it should be administered by immersion. But let us look to these passages which supposedly could not be understood in terms of immersion or dipping.

Judith 12:7 – NRSV: "So Holofernes commanded his guards not to hinder her. She remained in the camp three days. She went out each night to the valley of Bethulia, and **bathed** at the spring in the camp." She was in the water and washed her body and was probably almost wholly in the water. Moreover, the word *bapto* is used here, and not *baptizo*. The word, while it is related, is not the same. The word *baptizo* is much stronger in force and it is the word used for water baptism, while *bapto* is not.

Mark 7:4 – Why is it impossible to think that the Pharisees would dip their "cups and pots and copper vessels and dining couches" and thus do exactly what *baptizo* or the noun (which is used in the last part of the verse) *baptismos* basically means? It is not difficult to imagine that the first three items in the phrase were immersed in water. The difficulty lies in the fourth item: dining couches or tables (KJV). The Greek word κλίνη (*kliné*, G2825) means "a small bed, a couch" or "a couch to recline on at meals"[90]. Most commentators point out that this item is missing in some manuscripts and is not included in the main text of the ESV. Some also point to this example as an exception to the meaning of *baptizo* and *baptismos* as immersion mainly because it is unimaginable. John Gill, a convinced Baptist and a man steeped into Jewish writings, argues otherwise. In a long commentary on Mark 7:4, with many citations from Jewish authors, he says the following on this part:

> ...but to washing tables by immersion, there is no objection; wherefore, to perplex this matter, and give further trouble,

it is insisted on that the word should be rendered “beds”; and it must be owned that it is so rendered in the Syriac, Persic, and Ethiopic versions, (in the Arabic version the clause is omitted,) and in many modern translations: and we are contented it should be so rendered. And these beds design either the couches they lay, or leaned upon at meals; or the beds they slept in at nights: these were capable of being polluted, in a ceremonial sense; for of such pollution, and such washing, are we to understand these traditions: for those things regard not the bare washing of them when naturally unclean, when they ought to be washed; and it is the custom of all people to wash them when this is the case. A bed, and bedstead, are capable of such pollution as soon as they are shaved with a fish skin, or are completed without polishing {g}; that is, as soon as they are finished; and there are several ways by which they are defiled...Now these were to be washed when they had received any defilement, and that by immersion. Their canons run thus:

“□□□, “a bed”, that is wholly defiled, if □□□□□□, “he dips” it, part by part, it is pure {l};’’

again {m},

“□□□□□ □□ □□ □□□□, “if he dips the bed in it”, (the pool of water,) although its feet are plunged into the thick clay (at the bottom of the pool), it is clean.’’

If it should be insisted upon, that it ought to be shown and proved, that the very bolsters and pillows on which they lay and leaned, were washed in this way, we are able to do it:

“□□□ □□□□□□, “a pillow”, or “a bolster” of skin, when a man lifts up the ends, or mouths of them, out of the water, the water which is within them will be drawn; what shall he do? □□□□□□, “he must dip them”, and lift them up by their fringes {n}.’’

In short, it is a rule with the Jews, that

“wheresoever, in the law, washing of the flesh, or of clothes, is mentioned, it means nothing else than the dipping of the whole body in water--for if any man wash himself all over, except the top of his little finger, he is still in his uncleanness {o}.’’[10]

Those who insist that the word cannot mean immersion here, do so because they cannot imagine a bed or a couch being immersed. But this cannot overthrow the basic meaning of the word. And even if we say that, for the sake of argument, immersion is not meant here, still, this doesn’t overthrow the basic meaning of *baptizo* and *baptismos*. An exception does not overthrow a rule. In **Mishnah Mikvaot 7:7** (a work from around 190-230 A.D.), it is said:

If one **immerses a bed** in it [in a *mikveh* containing precisely forty *se’ah*], even if its legs sink into thick mud [at the bottom of the *mikveh*, which is not counted as part of its waters] it is pure, because the waters precede it. If the waters of a *mikveh* are shallow [**such that one cannot immerse one’s whole body at once**], one may weigh down even bundles of wood or bundles of reeds [with weights, on one side of the *mikveh*,] so that the **waters will rise, and then he can descend and immerse**. Regarding a [impure] needle on the steps of a cavern [which houses a *mikveh*], if one was moving the waters back and forth [by stirring the waters around with one’s hands or feet], once a wave passes over it [the needle], it is pure.

A *mikveh* is a ritual bath of purity. By their admission, the Jews ritually cleansed a bed by immersion in a bath containing 293 liters of water (**40 seahs**). Even the comment about the shallow water of the *mikveh* points very clearly to immersing of the whole bed and not merely sprinkling it with water. See also **Mishnah Kelim 18:9**. Ferguson explains:

The requirement of the tractate *Mikwaoth* clearly point to a total submersion. For a valid immersion, water had to touch all parts of the body. Detailed regulations covered the size of an artificial immersion pool to permit a complete immersion and what constituted clean water to fill it. The size once again had to be sufficient to hold the forty seahs of water and to have a depth to permit a grown person to cover the body in it...Excavations have revealed hundreds of mikvaoth in Israel, over 150 from the first century Jerusalem alone (including those adjoining the temple mount) as well as many at Jericho, Gamla, Masada, and Herodium from the period before the destruction of the temple.[97]

The only difficulty that the immersing of beds or tables or dining couches brings lies in our ignorance of Jewish tradition.

Matthew 3:11 – Why isn’t it impossible to think of dipping or immersion in the case of John’s baptism? This is what the word means, and as we will argue, this is how the Lord Jesus was baptized—by immersion. To argue in the manner of “how could John do this” is to dismiss the basic meaning of the word. John went to places where there was much water (John 3:23), why would he need this if all he could do was to pour some water or sprinkle it? As for baptism with the Holy Spirit, this would mean that we become *overwhelmed* with the Spirit and be affected by Him in our whole being. The word *baptizo* can surely be used in a figurative sense, don’t forget Mark 10:38-39 and Luke 12:50. But this does not overthrow its meaning of *immersion* and *dipping.* **See above** on the meaning of *baptize* including its metaphorical meaning.

Luke 11:37-38 – The Presbyterian Albert Barnes notes on v. 38, 'The origin of the custom of washing with so much formality "before" they partook of their meals was that they did not use, as we do, knives and forks, but used their hands only. Hence, as their hands would be often in a dish on the table, it was esteemed proper that they should be washed clean before eating.'[6] And he sends us to Mark 7:4 to compare with this passage. The Cambridge Greek Testament for Schools and Colleges says of this practice:

> **ἐθαύμασεν ὅτι οὐ πρῶτον ἐβαπτίσθη**. Literally, '*bathed*.' No washing was necessary to eat a few dates or figs. At the chief meal of the day, where all dipped their hands into a common dish, it was a matter of cleanliness.[98]

This practice is parallel, apparently, to Mark 7:4, which we noted was perfectly fine to understand as dipping or immersing one's hand into water. Likewise, Charles J. Ellicott notes, 'Here the word "washed" (literally, though of course not in the technical sense, *baptized*) implies actual immersion, or, at least, a process that took in the whole body.'[99]

Luke 12:50 – This is a metaphorical way of speaking of baptism and of being plunged and immersed in the wrath of God in His whole being. John Gill notes, "the baptism of his sufferings is meant, which was compared to a baptism, because of the largeness and abundance of them; he was as it were immersed, or plunged into them; and which almost all interpreters observe on the text, and by which they confess the true import and primary signification of the word used; as in baptism, performed by immersion, the person is plunged into water, is covered with it, and continues awhile under it, and then is raised out of it, and which being once done, is done no more; so the sufferings of Christ were so many and large, that he was as it were covered with them, and he continued under them for a time, and under the power of death and the grave, when being raised from thence, he dies no more, death hath no more dominion over him."[10]Hercules Collins notes, "*Our Lord's Sufferings are called a Baptism*, because *his Pains* were not only upon one part of his Body, but his *whole Soul and Body* was baptized and plunged into Sorrows."[100]

Romans 6:3 – We argued in paragraph 1 that this passage (and Col. 2:12; Gal. 3:27) refers to vital union with Christ. This refers to the union of the whole person of the believer to Christ. Moreover, immersion and dipping are necessary to picture the imagery and union with Christ in His death, burial, and resurrection. Pouring and sprinkling simply will not do. Interestingly, Joseph Pipa's article in *The Case For Covenantal Infant Baptism* is plagued with blindness and the extreme position that *immersion* does not picture union with Christ.[101] The greatest flaw is that he wholly ignores the lexical meaning of *baptizo* and ignores the way in which texts like Romans 6:3-4 and Colossians 2:12 *express* our union with Christ. They speak of our union with Christ, but they picture this blessed union in specific moments in redemptive history: Christ's death, burial, and resurrection. Therefore, since our union is expressed in these stages or in these actions, immersion shows best our union in Christ's death, burial, and resurrection over against sprinkling or pouring.

1 Corinthians 12:13 – This is likewise metaphorical, speaking of our baptism into the body of Christ. Our joining into the body of Christ. There is no water here.

Hebrews 9:10 (cf. verses 13, 14, 19, 21) – In Hebrews 9:10, the noun βαπτισμός (*baptismos*, G909) is used and not the verb *baptizo*, and in the four verses referenced, the word ῥαντίζω (*rhantizo*, G4472) is used which means "to sprinkle." The context of v. 10 and the other passages is not the same. These various washings refer to ceremonial washings done at the Temple. Let us not forget that there was a huge Brazen Sea/Molten Sea/Sea Of Cast Metal in the Temple (2 Chron. 4:2-6, see image below) of which it is said that the "sea was for the priests to wash in". They did not wash *with* its water but *in* its water. Therefore, this would refer to the washing of the priests, as it is consistent with the basic meaning of the word, which does not mean pouring or sprinkling, rather dipping and immersing. Otherwise, the Author would have used a different word which did not mean dipping or submersion. The sprinklings, on the other hand, referred to the sprinkling of blood upon the people and on the mercy seat (among other things) that we often read of in Leviticus (e.g., Lev. 8:30; 16:14-15). **See also above** on the different usages of dipping, sprinkling, pouring, and washing in the Law.

Concerning this Great Sea, Doug van Dorn writes:

> There was also something called the Great Sea (1 Kgs 7:23). It was made of bronze. The Great Sea was tremendously large; some seven feet high and fifteen feet in diameter, holding about 10,000 gallons of water and weighing between 25-30 tons when empty. As Beale notes, "Priests would have had to climb a ladder to wash in it." (Beale 2004b: 34, n. 11). There were also ten additional washing basins (1 Kgs 7:38) added to the temple for various washings...These washings (especially in the Great Sea) were later called by the Jews "mikvehs." A mikveh is a ritual bath in a pool of fresh water. It is *necessarily* an immersion. These baths have been practiced since before the times of Christ, and they are still practiced today. Josephus refers to his master Banus (an Essene) as ritually "bathing himself in cold water

frequently by night and by day." (Josephus, *Vita* §2).

Jews refer to the baths of the priest into temple ministry (2 Chron 4:6) or tabernacle ministry (Ex 29:4) as mikvehs. The ceremonial idea comes from Lev 15:13, "When the one with a discharge is cleansed of his discharge, then he shall count for himself seven days for his cleansing, and wash his clothes. *And he shall bathe his body in fresh water* and shall be clean."...Solomon had gigantic aqueducts and cisterns of water running right up to the temple so that all of the water could be *fresh* water, because this is what the law demanded. [102]

1 Corinthians 10:1-2 – They were covered from all sides by the roaring sea. The sea became like a wall for them. They were covered by water on both sides. The passage speaks of "our fathers were all **under the cloud**, and all passed **through the sea**, and all were baptized into Moses **in the cloud** and **in the sea**". The Israelites were identified with Moses through their baptism "into Moses". But notice that the description given perfectly fits the basic meaning of *baptizo* even while 1 Corinthians 10 is obviously metaphorical. They were engulfed as it were in the sea and in the cloud. Notice that the usual language was still kept intact. They were baptized ἐν τῇ νεφέλῃ [*en te nephelé*] and ἐν τῇ θαλάσσῃ [*en te thalassé*] using the preposition *en* which basically means "in." Scripture, even in speaking of this metaphorical baptism, does not say that they were baptized *with* the cloud or *with* the sea, but in them. Keach explains, "A very plain Figure doubtless, they having the Water on each side of them; and to which they might have added, the Watery Cloud over them, whether it broke down upon them or no, they were, as it were, buried in the Cloud and in the Sea; so that this Notion of Typical Baptism makes nothing for Sprinkling."[103]

Looking at these passages, we see that it is not at all impossible to understand them to be speaking of immersion, dipping, plunging, whether literally or metaphorically, as Berkhof supposed. This means that the basic meaning of *baptizo* remains standing, which is "to immerse, to dip, to plunge."

Sometimes Ezekiel 36:25 is cited to support sprinkling instead of immersion for baptism, but I believe that this argument is to be mentioned simply to be dismissed. There is nothing here about baptism. The passage is wholly spiritual. It speaks of God's spiritual cleansing of us from sin and our idolatry, it is not prescribing a mode of baptism. The mode of baptism is known via the use of the specific word *baptizo,* and not from passages that have nothing to do with water baptism.

The Baptism Of John And Christ

Can we discern any mode of baptism from the texts which we have of John's baptism? I believe that it is crystal clear that our Lord's baptism was by immersion. Here, I am trying to ignore the clear lexical support for *baptizo* meaning to immerse, and I'm trying to discern from the account if any mode is described.

Mark 1:5 says that people were being baptized by John "in" (ἐν, *en*) the river Jordan. They were standing in the river. John wasn't getting some water from the river, while he stood on the side, but they were in the river and being baptized *in* the river. John was mainly baptizing in the Jordan (Matt. 3:5-6; John 1:28; 10:40), although Aenon is also mentioned. That is a place which John chose "because water was plentiful there" (John 3:23). Gill notes on John 3:23, '"many waters"; not little purling streams, and rivulets; but, as Nonnus renders it, abundance of water; or a multitude of it,...and what was sufficient to immerse the whole body in, as Calvin, Aretius, Piscator, and Grotius, on the place, observe; and which was agreeable not only to: the practice of the Jews, who used dipping in their baptisms, and purifications, as Musculus and Lightfoot assert; but to John's method and practice elsewhere'.[10] The Jews would not have been surprised that John was actually baptizing people, since they had various immersions as ceremonial washings without invoking the questionable practice of proselyte baptism at the time our Lord.[104]

But now we should take a look at how our Lord Himself was baptized. Of this, we read in Matthew 3:16 and Mark 1:10.

Matt. 3:16 And when Jesus was baptized, immediately **he went up from the water**, and behold, the heavens were opened to him, and he saw the Spirit of God descending like a dove and coming to rest on him;

Mark 1:10 And when **he came up out of the water**, immediately he saw the heavens being torn open and the Spirit descending on him like a dove.

As all the people were coming to John the Baptist and being baptized "in the river Jordan" (Matt. 3:6), in the same way, the Lord Jesus went to John in the river Jordan. He was not standing near the river Jordan, but as with the rest, in the actual river itself. Therefore, when it is said that He "came up out of the water" (Mark 1:10), it presupposes that He actually went *into* the water. The expression ἐκ τοῦ ὕδατος (*ek tou hudatos,* out of the water) here is parallel to Acts 8:39 where the mode clearly was dipping and immersion. It does not speak of Christ going from the river to land, but rather coming up from *under* the waters. John Gill notes on Matthew 3:16, saying:

> One would be at a loss at first sight for a reason why the Evangelist should relate this circumstance; for after the ordinance was administered, why should he stay in the water? what should he do there? Everyone would naturally and reasonably conclude, without the mention of such a circumstance, that as soon as his baptism was over, he would immediately come up out of the water. However, we learn this from it, that since it is said, that he came up out of the water, he must first have gone down into it; must have been in it, and was baptized in it; a circumstance strongly in favour of baptism by immersion: for that Christ should go down into the river, more or less deep, to the ankles, or up to the knees, in order that John should sprinkle water on his face, or pour it on his head, as is ridiculously represented in the prints, can hardly obtain any credit with persons of thought and sense.[10]

Wayne Grudem writes:

> The fact that John and Jesus went into the river and came up out of it strongly suggests immersion, since sprinkling or pouring of water could much more readily have been done standing beside the river, particularly because multitudes of people were coming for baptism. John's gospel tells us, further, that John the Baptist "was baptizing at Aenon near Salim, because there was much water there" (John 3:23). Again, it would not take "much water" to baptize people by sprinkling, but it would take much water to baptize by immersion.[105]

Hercules Collins likewise joins in, saying, "'Tis said of our most blessed Lord Jesus, *That he went up out of the Water*; which in common sense signifies, He first went down, not only to the Water, but *into* the Water, *and came up out of the Water*."[100] Aside from the lexical meaning of the word *baptizo,* we have this description of Christ's baptism to have been by immersion, as we contend ours should likewise be. Although there is a difference in the signification and meaning between John's baptism and Christian baptism, yet the mode is the same.

The Baptism In Acts

Can we discern a mode of Christian baptism in Acts? I believe that there is a place where we clearly see immersion being practiced, but as to the other places, there is nothing special mentioned by which we can discern the mode, except obviously, the very meaning of the word which we are leaving out of the question now.

> Acts 8:36-39 And as they were going along the road they came to some water, and the eunuch said, "See, here is water! What prevents me from being baptized?" 37 --- 38 And he commanded the chariot to stop, and they both **went down into the water**, Philip and the eunuch, and he baptized him. 39 And **when they came up out of the water**, the Spirit of the Lord carried Philip away, and the eunuch saw him no more, and went on his way rejoicing.

The eunuch sees some water and asks Philip to baptize him right away. Then we read that they both went *down into the water.* The eunuch didn't stand on the side until Philip got some water to baptize him with. If pouring or sprinkling was a proper way of administering this ordinance, the eunuch would have undoubtedly had some water with him. Notice that it is the eunuch who asks to be baptized, this shows that Philip schooled him very well in the doctrine of Christ. John Calvin, the paedobaptist, admits that immersion of the whole body was the practice of the ancient Church when he comments on this passage, saying, "Here we see the rite used among the men of old time in baptism; for they put all the body into the water."[20] But he then goes on to say the fact that we should not make a problem because "a small different of a ceremony" that ministers "sprinkle the body or the head." Well, brother John, it is not a small difference, it is simply what the practice of the ancient Church, by your admission, was, and the basic meaning of the word. The Expositor's Greek Testament says 'εἰς τὸ ὕδωρ [into the water]: even if the words are rendered "unto the water" (Plumptre), the context ἀνέβησαν ἐκ [came up out] indicates that the baptism was by immersion, and there can be no doubt that this was the custom in the early Church.'[106]

In v. 39, after going into the water, they come up from under the water and the Spirit carries Philip away, and the eunuch goes on his way home. Here we have an instance of baptism by immersion, where a mode of sprinkling or pouring would have been done easier and with less difficulty, but it was not done until they came to a proper place where the eunuch could be immersed.

The Symbolism Of Baptism

Another argument for immersion is one which we have already alluded to when dealing with the passages about union with Christ using baptismal imagery (Rom. 6:3-5; Col. 2:11-12; Gal. 3:27, **see above**). As baptism symbolizes, among other things, our union with Christ's death, burial, and resurrection, so, baptism by immersion pictures this union perfectly. As the

believer goes into the water, they are picturing their union with Christ's death and burial in the "water-grave." They lay down their old self and their sinful lives behind in the waters of baptism. As they picture the death of the old man, so they come up out of the water to picture the resurrection of the new man created in Christ's image. The old is gone, behold the new is here. They died with Christ, and they were raised with and thanks to Christ. The coming out of the water would picture the receiving of the new life in Christ from God and emerging as a new creature, and thus symbolizing regeneration. This is a crucial aspect of what baptism signifies. Wayne Grudem notes the following on the basis of Romans 6:3-4 and Colossians 2:12—

> When the candidate for baptism goes down into the water it is a picture of going down into the grave and being buried. Coming up out of the water is then a picture of being raised with Christ to walk in newness of life. Baptism thus very clearly pictures death to one's old way of life and rising to a new kind of life in Christ. But baptism by sprinkling or pouring simply misses this symbolism.[107]

But this picturing of union with Christ's death and resurrection cannot happen if baptism is administered by sprinkling, pouring, or effusion, but only by immersion/dipping/submersion. Not to mention the fact that very often, these improper *modes* of baptism are used on improper *subjects* of baptism. Therefore, I believe that there is no biblical baptism actually taking place where such things are practiced. Hercules Collins, one of the signers of the Confession, wrote:

> The end of the Ordinance sheweth ***Baptism* to be *dipping***; which is to hold forth unto a Believer, ***the Death, Burial, and Resurrection of Christ***; as the Apostle saith, Rom. 6. 4. *We are buried with him in Baptism*. Although there be **no manner of *similitude* and *likeness* between Christ's Death and Burial, with *sprinkling a little Water on the Face***, yet **burying in the Water is as lively a Similitude and Likeness of Jesus Christ's Death**, as the breaking Bread, and pouring out the Wine is at the Lord's Table: So that they lose one great End of this Ordinance, who Rantize [sprinkle] instead of Baptize; for no Man accounts him buried, who hath only Earth cast on his Face, but he who is in the Heart of the Earth, and covered with the same.[108]

Other Modes Not Baptisms?

It is obvious that the framers of the Confession rejected infant baptism as unbiblical and often called it a doctrine of antichrist. Therefore, they rejected their own infant baptisms and that of others as infants. They did not see those as proper baptisms on two grounds: 1) its subjects and 2) its mode of administration. The New Testament teaches that believers alone are to be baptized, therefore, when an unbeliever gets "baptized", it is actually not baptism, but he is simply getting wet. Infants are unbelievers and ignorant of the gospel, therefore, they are unfit subjects of baptism, and so, their baptism is invalid. But, our forefathers also objected to the mode of baptism for infants. Infants are usually sprinkled with little water on their faces, which is not what biblical baptism is. There are several ways which the Baptists argued against sprinkling not being what God had appointed and an invalid mode of baptism. But, what do we do in the case of those adults who were baptized not by sprinkling? Would such a baptism count as valid? In my not-wide reading of some Baptists from that time (John Norcott, John Spilsbury, Thomas Patient, Hercules Collins, Benjamin Keach), I do not remember them mentioning anything about sprinkled adults. Therefore, this raises a difficulty concerning the "baptisms" of adults by sprinkling. Is that a valid baptism? My thoughts are mixed and I believe that one should decide if they need to have baptism properly administered to them with their elders.

Sprinkling, pouring or any other mode than immersion or dipping is not baptism at all. Baptism, by definition and apostolic example, is by immersion. Therefore, in a strict sense, there is no "baptism" when the water is applied by sprinkling, pouring, or any other mode than immersion. Moreover, that which baptism signifies, union with Christ in His death, burial, and resurrection, is lost in all other modes other than immersion. But, an important aspect of baptism may be present in an invalid mode, namely, a testimony of faith on which this "baptism" is based. I would say that baptism, not by immersion and not based on the testimony of the one baptized, is no baptism, but I find this question very difficult. It seems to me that a reading of this paragraph would indicate that the framers believed all other forms of baptism to be invalid and undue administrations of this ordinance, but some people disagree about what is communicated in this paragraph. Dr. Waldron writes:

> The Confession does not assert that someone baptized by another mode is not baptized. Immersion is necessary only to the 'due' administration. This may mean its 'proper, fitting, or suitable' administration. The Confession does not take up all the possible irregularities. It does not manifest a rigid, externalistic, or superstitious fascination with how much water is used.[109]

But I find it hard to imagine that the framers would accept as valid baptism that which is an "undue" administration of this

ordinance. If there is a proper and prescribed way of administering this ordinance and which is by immersion, how can other modes then be considered as baptism? Another brother writes:

> The language of the Confession at this point is interesting: "immersion…is necessary to the due administration of this ordinance." The framers of the Confession were apparently unwilling to be absolutely inflexible on the mode of baptism. To put it another way, they were prepared to accept as valid a baptism which involved pouring or sprinkling. At the same time, they believed that the mode was not simply a matter of indifference. There IS a correct way, and that way is immersion.[110]

I make the same reply as above to this citation. It seems that sprinkled adults was not an issue which our forefathers dealt with. But it is clear that they did not consider other modes as baptism. Keach, for example, says that "Sprinkling is Sprinkling, let it be done how you please, but it never was, nor never will be Baptizing."[111] When answering an objection against dipping, he writes, "you in (your Practice, and in your own Sense) Baptize but the Face only; so that all your People are unbaptized Persons"[112]. Collins argues, "Administration of Baptism, by Sprinkling, Pouring or Dropping, doth no way answer the Commission, nor Intention of Christ the Law-maker, *ergo*, the Administration of Baptism, by Sprinkling, Pouring or Dropping, is not Authentick."[113] Statements like these could be multiplied. I would be hard-pressed to argue that our forefathers accepted other modes of baptism as baptisms. How can they consider an *undue* administration as valid? This means that *they* most likely did not accept it, but doesn't answer the question for us. They believed other forms were invalid because there was a prescribed form. Nor were they focussing on externals as was and is alleged of them. Collins writes:

> And whereas it hath been too generally cast as a Reproach upon the People called *Baptists*, both by those stiled of the Reformed Religion, and others, that we lay more stress upon external Ordinances, and particularly Baptism, then we ought, of which charge we are altogether ignorant, because nothing short of the immense Bowels of the Father, and infinite Merit of the Son, is our Foundation for Salvation; and why we should be so hardly born upon for an Act of Obedience to our Sovereign and most Gracious Lord, is a thing to us unaccountable[114]

John Norcott gives us seven reasons why sprinkling is an improper mode of baptism.

1. Because God is a jealous God, & stands upon small things in matters of Worship; 'tis likely Nadab and Abihu thought, if they put fire in the Censer it might serve, though it were not fire from the Altar; but God calls it strange fire, and therefore he burns them with strange fire, *Lev*. 10. 1,2. And *Moses* adds, *Ver*. 3. *This is it that the Lord spake, saying, I will be sanctified in them that come, nigh me, and before all the people I will be glorified*. God 'bid Moses speak to the Rock, and *Moses* smote the Rock, and therefore must dye short of *Canaan*, Num. 20.8, 11, 12.
2. Sprinkling may not serve, because thereby the end of the Ordinance is lost, which is to shew the Death, Burial, and Resurrection of Christ, Rom. 6. 4. *We are buried with him by Baptism, that like as Christ was raised*, &c.
3. Sprinkling will not serve, because it is not that God hath appointed. *Naaman* the Leper did think the waters of *Damascus* to be of the Tame vertue with (or better than) the waters *Israel*, 2 Kings 5. 12. *May I not wash in them and be clean*? God had appointed him to dip in the *Jordan,* not that there was more vertue in that water; but God did appoint him to dip in *Jordan*, and he did, and was clean. Dipping is God's Appointment.
4. Sprinkling will not serve, because it is not according to the Pattern. Christ went down into the water. *Philip* & the *Eunuch*, went down into the water, Act.8.38. Heb.8.5. *See thou make all things according to the Pattern.*
5. Sprinkling will not serve, because it is high presumption to change God's Ordinances; Is not God wise enough to appoint his own Worship how it shall be performed? *Isa*. 24. 5. *The Earth is defiled, because they have changed the Ordinance.*
6. Sprinkling will not serve, because Sprinkling is not Baptism; it is not the thing intended by God; Baptism is *Dipping* or *Plunging*. Sprinkling is not Baptism, therefore Sprinkling will not serve, *Luk*.7.29,30. Gods Councel is Baptism or Dipping.[115]

It is obvious from this citation that the only proper mode of baptism, as seen by this Particular Baptist, is immersion. But, as I

said at the beginning, this question has its difficulties and should be decided by the person themselves, their elders. and in prayer and in light of the Word of God.

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

(Matthew 28:19)

Footnotes

1. ^ *Many Scriptural references have been supplied by Samuel Waldron's Modern Exposition of 1689 Baptist Confession of Faith which was apparently supplied by the Westminster Confession of Faith 1646.*
2. ^ *Hercules Collins. Believers Baptism from Heaven, and of Divine Institution. Infants Baptism from Earth, and Human Invention Proved from the Commission of Christ, the great Law-giver to the Gospel-Church. With a Brief, yet sufficient Answer to Thomas Wall's Book, called, Baptism Anatomized, Together with a brief Answer to a part of Mr. Daniel William's catechism, in his Book unto Youth. (London, 1691). p. 6.*
3. ^ *Benjamin Keach. Gold Refin'd, or, Baptism in its Primitive Purity. Edited by Simon Wartanian. (London, 1689). 12.*
4. ^ *A. H. Strong. Systematic Theology: A Compendium Designed For The Use Of Theological Students. (London: Pickering & Inglis, 1970. Originally, 1907). p. 931.*
5. ^ *Stanford E. Murrell. A Foundation For Faith An Introductory Study of Systematic Theology: With References To The Baptist Confession of Faith of 1689. p. 215.*
6. a, b, c, d, e, f, g, h, i, j, k *Albert Barnes' Notes on the Bible. Taken from the TheWord Bible Software. In loc.*
7. a, b *Jamieson, Fausset, Brown. Commentary Critical and Explanatory on the Whole Bible (Full). Taken from the TheWord Bible Software. In loc.*
8. ^ *Thomas Patient. The Doctrine of Baptism, And the Distinction of the Covenant. Edited by Simon Wartanian (London, 1654). p. 22. Italics original.*
9. ^ *Wayne Grudem. Systematic Theology: An Introduction to Biblical Doctrine. (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1994). p. 969, n. 7.*
10. a, b, c, d, e, f, g, h, i, j, k, l, m, n *John Gill. Exposition of the Entire Bible. Taken from the TheWord Bible Software. In loc.*
11. ^ *Strong, Systematic Theology. p. 945.*
12. ^ *Richard C. Barcellos, "An Exegetical Appraisal of Colossians 2:11-12" in Recovering A Covenantal Heritage: Essays In Baptist Covenant Theology. Edited by Richard C. Barcellos.*

(Palmdale, CA: RBAP, 2014). p. 459.

13. ^ *William D. Mounce. Basics of Biblical Greek: Grammar. (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan. Third Edition, 2013). p. 195.*
14. ^ *Understanding How Greek Verbs Work. (Blue Letter Bible). Emphasis original.*
15. ^ *Glossary of grammatical terms. Emphasis original.*
16. ^ *Barcellos, "Colossians 2:11-12"*
17. a, b *Ibid, p. 463.*
18. ^ *Ibid, p. 466.*
19. ^ *Ibid, p. 467.*
20. a, b, c *John Calvin. Commentaries. Taken from the TheWord Bible Software. In loc.*
21. ^ *William D. Mounce. Mounce's Complete Expository Dictionary of Old and New Testament Words. (Zondervan, 2006). p. 1150.*
22. ^ *Henry George Liddell, Scott Robert, Henry Stuart Jones. Liddell-Scott-Jones Lexicon of Classical Greek. Retrieved from TheWord Bible Software. See reference for the Strong's number.*
23. ^ *Hercules Collins. The Antidote Proved a Counterfeit or Error Detected, and Believers Baptism Vindicated. (London, 1693). p. 13.*
24. ^ *John Owen in Covenant Theology: From Adam To Christ. Edited by Ronald D. Miller, James M. Renihan, Francisco Orozco. (Palmdale, CA: Reformed Baptist Academic Press, 2005). p. 198.*
25. ^ *Token. (The Free Dictionary).*
26. ^ *Seal. (Webster's 1913 Dictionary).*
27. ^ *Mounce, Expository Dictionary. p. 620.*
28. ^ *Pledge. (The Free Dictionary).*
29. a, b *An Appendix. Second Baptist Confession Of Faith Of 1689.*
30. ^ *Collins, Believers Baptism from Heaven. pp. 12-13. Italics original.*
31. ^ *Keach, Gold Refin'd. pp. 75-76.*
32. ^ *The best summary for the case against the canonical inclusion of Mark 16:9-20 that I've read is Daniel M. Doriani, "Matthew 28:18-20 and the Institution of Baptism" in The Case For Covenantal Infant Baptism. Ed. Gregg Strawbridge. (Phillipsburg, NJ: P&R Publishing, 2003). pp. 43-48. See also James R. White. The King James Only Controversy: Can You Trust Modern Translations? (Bloomington, MN: Bethany House Publishers, 2009, 2nd. edition). pp. 316-320.*
33. ^ *Does Mark 16:16 teach that baptism is necessary for salvation? GotQuestions Ministries.*
34. ^ *Does Acts 2:38 teach that baptism is necessary for salvation? GotQuestions Ministries.*
35. a, b *Grudem, Systematic Theology. p. 970.*
36. ^ *Philip Schaff. A Popular Commentary on the New Testament. Taken from the TheWord Bible Software. In loc.*
37. ^ *HCSB Study Bible, Holman Christian Standard Bible. (Nashville, Tenn. 2010). p. 2104.*
38. ^ *Preacher's Complete Homiletical Commentary. Taken from the TheWord Bible Software. In loc.*
39. ^ *Zondervan NASB Study Bible. Edited by Kenneth L. Barker, Donald W. Burdick, & Kenneth Boa. (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Pub. House. 1999). p. 1817.*
40. ^ *Grudem, Systematic Theology. p. 974.*
41. ^ *Keach, Gold Refin'd. p. 46.*
42. ^ *John Norcott. Baptism Discovered Plainly and Faithfully According to the Word of God. (London, 1694, 3rd edition). p. 8. Italics original. The third edition was released nearly after Norcott's death and edited by William Kiffin and Richard Claridge.*
43. a, b *Hercules Collins. Believers Baptism from Heaven, and of Divine Institution. Infants Baptism from Earth, and Human Invention. 1691. p. 5.*
44. ^ *Strong, Systematic Theology. p. 946.*
45. ^ *Samuel D. Renihan. The Mystery of Christ: His Covenant and His Kingdom. (FL: Founders*

Press, 2019). p. 166.

46. ^ *Joel Beeke and Ray B. Lanning, "Unto You, and to Your Children" in Covenantal Infant Baptism. pp. 49-50.*
47. ^ *For example, 'In each case, the households are received into the visible church together with the heads of those households. Significantly, we are told that the households of Cornelius, Lydia, the Philippian jailer, and Stephanas were baptized. Similarly, children of believing parents are addressed as members of churches at Ephesus (Eph. 6:1-4) and Colossae (Col. 3:20). These children were also baptized, as Paul affirms in Colossians 2:11-12, where he calls baptism "the circumcision of Christ"' (p. 52). I'm sure that every Baptist is dying to know how these statements can be biblically substantiated. Sadly, Beeke and Lanning leave us in the dark.*
48. ^ *Ibid., p. 55.*
49. ^ *Jamin Hüber, "Acts 2:39 in its Context (Part 1): An Exegetical Summary of Acts 2:39 and Paedobaptism" in Recovering A Covenantal Heritage. pp. 384-385.*
50. ^ *Ibid., p. 391.*
51. ^ *Hercules Collins. The Sandy Foundation of Infant Baptism Shaken: or, An Answer to a Book, Entituled Vindiciæ Fœderis, Published by Mr. Mence. (London, 1695). p. 12. Italics original.*
52. ^ *Hüber, "Acts 2:39 in its Context (Part 1)." p. 399.*
53. ^ *Ibid., pp. 400-401.*
54. ^ *See Jamin Hübner, "Acts 2:39 in its Context (Part 2): Case Studies in Paedobaptist Interpretations of Acts 2:39" in Recovering A Covenantal Heritage. pp. 417-448.*
55. ^ *As quoted in ibid., p. 403.*
56. ^ *Keach, Gold Refin'd. pp. 57-58.*
57. ^ *As cited in W. Gary Crampton. From Paedobaptism to Credobaptism: A Study of the Westminster Standards and Infant Baptism. (Owensboro, KY: RBAP, 2010). p. 65. Italics original.*
58. ^ *As cited in Crampton, From Paedobaptism to Credobaptism. pp. 65-66.*
59. ^ *Bryan Chapell, "A Pastoral View of Infant Baptism" in Covenantal Infant Baptism. pp. 20-21. Emphasis original.*
60. ^ *Ibid., p. 21.*
61. ^ *Keach, Gold Refin'd. p. 55. Italics original.*
62. ^ *Chapell, "Pastoral View." p. 13.*
63. ^ *Mark E. Ross, "Baptism and Circumcision as Signs and Seals" in Covenantal Infant Baptism. pp. 107-108.*
64. ^ *Keach, Gold Refin'd. pp. 93-94.*
65. ^ *Stan Reeves. A Reformed Baptist View of I Cor. 7:14.*
66. ^ *Crampton, From Paedobaptism to Credobaptism. pp. 73-74.*
67. ^ *As cited in Crampton, From Paedobaptism to Credobaptism. pp. 75-76.*
68. ^ *Keach, Gold Refin'd. pp. 79-80. Italics are original.*
69. ^ *Collins, Believers Baptism. p. 15. Footnotes removed.*
70. ^ *Hercules Collins. The Antidote Proved a Counterfeit or Error Detected, and Believers Baptism Vindicated. (London, 1693). pp. 7-8.*
71. a, b *Form for the Administration of Baptism. (Protestant Reformed Churches in America).*
72. ^ *Ross, "Baptism and Circumcision." p. 106.*
73. ^ *Chapell, "Pastoral View." p. 24.*
74. ^ *Doriani, "Matthew 28:18-28." p. 42.*
75. ^ *John M. Frame. Systematic Theology: An Introduction to Christian Belief. (P&R Publishing, 2014). p. 1063.*
76. ^ *Norcott, Baptism discovered plainly. pp. 6-7.*
77. ^ *John L. Dagg. A Manual of Church Order. (Harrisonburg, VA: Sprinkle Pub. 2012, originally 1858). pp. 71-72. Emphasis original.*

78. ^ *Everett Ferguson. Baptism in the Early Church: History, Theology, and Liturgy in the First Five Centuries. (Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans Pub. Co., 2009). pp. 135-136.*
79. ^ *Ibid., p. 38.*
80. ^ *Ibid., p. 43.*
81. ^ *Grudem, Systematic Theology. p. 967.*
82. ^ *Ferguson, Baptism in the Early Church. pp. 47-48. Italics are his.*
83. a, b *Ibid., p. 49.*
84. ^ *Ibid., p. 52.*
85. ^ *Ibid., p. 53.*
86. ^ *Mounce, Expository Dictionary. p. 52.*
87. ^ *Ibid, p. 1104.*
88. ^ *Baptism, Baptist, Baptize. Vine's Expository Dictionary of NT Words.*
89. ^ *Strong's Definitions in The Blue Letter Bible. G907.*
90. a, b *Joseph Henry Thayer's Greek Definitions. Taken from the TheWord Bible Software. See reference for the Strong's number.*
91. ^ *TDNT, from BibleWorks. Number 123, p. 93.*
92. ^ *Strong, Systematic Theology. p. 933.*
93. ^ *Grudem, Systematic Theology. p. 967, n. 4.*
94. ^ *Ferguson, Baptism in the Early Church. p. 57.*
95. ^ *These citations are taken from the English translation of the LXX by Sir Lancelot Charles Lee Brenton.*
96. ^ *Louis Berkhof. Systematic Theology. (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Banner of Truth Trust. 1963). p. 630.*
97. ^ *Ferguson, Baptism in the Early Church. p. 64. Footnote references were omitted.*
98. ^ *The Cambridge Bible for Schools and Colleges. Edited by J. J. S. Perowne. Taken from the TheWord Bible Software. In loc.*
99. ^ *Charles J. Ellicott. Commentary For English Readers. Taken from the TheWord Bible Software. In loc.*
100. a, b *Collins, Believers Baptism. p. 7. Italics original.*
101. ^ *Joseph Pipa, "The Mode of Baptism" in Covenantal Infant Baptism. pp. 112-126.*
102. ^ *Douglas Van Dorn. Waters of Creation: A Biblical-Theological Study of Baptism. Kindle Edition. pp. 51-52. Italics original, footnote references were removed.*
103. ^ *Keach, Gold Refin'd. p. 48.*
104. ^ *See Ferguson, Baptism in the Early Church. pp. 56-59, 63-76, 83-89.*
105. ^ *Grudem, Systematic Theology. p. 968.*
106. ^ *William Robertson Nicoll. The Expositor's Greek Testament. Taken from the TheWord Bible Software. In loc.*
107. ^ *Grudem, Systematic Theology. pp. 968-969.*
108. ^ *Collins, Believers Baptism. pp. 6-7. Italics original.*
109. ^ *Waldron, Exposition of 1689. p. 448.*
110. ^ *The London Baptist Confession of Faith | Exposition of Chapter 29. (Herald of Grace, 2013).*
111. ^ *Keach, Gold Refin'd. p. 27.*
112. ^ *Ibid., p. 36.*
113. ^ *Collins, The Sandy Foundation of Infant Baptism. p. 42.*
114. ^ *Ibid., pp. 39-40.*
115. ^ *Norcott, Baptism discovered plainly. p. 12. Italics original.*