

SACRAMENTS: BAPTISM

I. SACRAMENTS: Overview

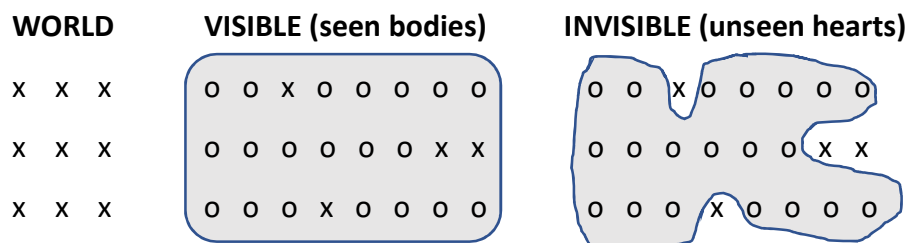
- A. Terminology: Sacrament or Ordinance
- B. Number: 2 (Baptism & Lord's Supper)
- C. Nature: "Holy **signs** and **seals** of the covenant of grace" (WCF 27.1;¹ Rom. 4:11)
 - i. Sign & Thing Signified
 - 1. Wedding Ring & Vows of marital faithfulness (Mal. 2:14)
 - 2. Rainbow & "I will not destroy with a flood" (Gen. 9:12-17)
 - 3. Circumcision & "I will be your God" (Gen. 17:8-11)
 - a. Continuity of Signs:

Old Testament		New Testament
Circumcision	→	Baptism (Col. 2:11-12)
Passover	→	Lord's Supper (1 Cor. 5:7-8)

- ii. Baptism signifies washing/cleansing/purification (Acts 22:16)
 - 1. John the Baptist called his a
 - 2. "Baptism of Repentance" (Mark 1:4-5)

II. PURPOSE of Baptism: Why do we do it?

- A. DOES NOT SAVE FROM SIN
 - i. Can someone be saved but not baptized? Yes (Luke 23:42-43; Matt. 9:2)
 - ii. Can someone be baptized but not saved? Yes (Matt. 7:21-23; 1 Cor. 5:11)
 - iii. Baptized ≠ Saved
 - iv. 🧠² COUNTERPOINT: 1 Peter 3:21
 - 1. 🖱 RESPONSE: Rom. 10:9-10; Eph. 2:8-9; Acts 16:30-31; ...
- B. Obedience to command of Jesus (Matt. 28:19)
- C. Visible difference between the Visible Church and the world:



D. Means of grace

- i. Represent, seal, and apply benefits of the new covenant (WSC 92)
- ii. "Sensible signs" (WSC 92)
- iii. "A visible form of an invisible grace" (St. Augustine)

¹ "WCF": Westminster Confession of Faith. "WSC": Westminster Shorter Catechism. "WLC": Westminster Larger Catechism.

² 🧠 indicates a rebuttal counter to my main point; 🖱 indicates my response to the rebuttal.

III. **BENEFITS** of Baptism: How does it help us?

- A. As a sign, it points outside ourselves to what *God* has done and promised to do
(It's not mainly what *we* do or promise.)
- B. As a seal, it marks us as particular heirs of God's promises
(It is effective, not just symbolic or a dedication.)
 - i. Strengthens faith
 - ii. Calls to obedience
 - iii. Unites us in love as members of one body
 - iv. Distinguishes from the world
- C. Fosters Christian growth as we "improve" it:

When faced with temptations, struggle, and bouts of depressions, Martin Luther famously would shout loudly in Latin:
"BAPTIZATUS SUM!"
(I AM BAPTIZED!)



WLC Q167: How is our Baptism to be improved by us?

A167: The needful but much neglected duty of improving our Baptism, is to be performed by us all our life long, especially in the time of temptation, and when we are present at the administration of it to others; by serious and thankful consideration of the nature of it, and of the ends for which Christ instituted it, the privileges and benefits conferred and sealed thereby, and our solemn vow made therein; by being humbled for our sinful defilement, our falling short of, and walking contrary to, the grace of baptism, and our engagements; by growing up to assurance of pardon of sin, and of all other blessings sealed to us in that sacrament; by drawing strength from the death and resurrection of Christ, into whom we are baptized, for the mortifying of sin, and quickenings of grace; and by endeavoring to live by faith, to have our conversation in holiness and righteousness, as those that have therein given up their names to Christ; and to walk in brotherly love, as being baptized by the same Spirit into one body.

IV. **MODE** of Baptism: How do we baptize?


- A. In name of Father, Son, Spirit (Matt. 28:19)
- B. Water (Acts 10:47)
- C. Immersing, dipping, sprinkling, or pouring
 - i. 🧠 Immersion only
 - 1. 🧠 Greek βαπτίζω means "to dip, submerge"
 - a. 🖱 Mark 7:14 "wash [βαπτίζω]... tables"
 - b. 🖱 Luke 11:38 "wash [βαπτίζω] before dinner"
 - c. 🖱 Dan. 4:23 (LXX) "wet [βαπτίζω] with dew"
 - d. 🖱 1 Cor 10:2 "baptized [βαπτίζω]... in the cloud and in the sea"

- e. Baptism of Holy Spirit (Acts 1:5)
 - i. Acts 2:17,18,33 Spirit “poured out”
 - ii. Acts 11:15-16 Spirit “fell on”
- 2. John went to baptize where water was “plentiful” (John 3:23)
 - a. Acts 16:33 Jailer “the same hour of the night”
 - b. Acts 2:41 In Jerusalem “that day about 3,000 souls”
 - c. Dry desert regions of the Ancient Near East
- 3. “Up from” water (Matt. 3:16); “Down into” water (Acts 8:38)
 - a. These do not necessarily mean fully immersed
- 4. It must represent burial death and new life (Rom. 6:4-5; Col. 2:12)
 - a. Christ’s “baptism” of literal death/suffering (Mk. 10:39; Lk. 12:50)
 - b. John the Baptist suggests nothing of death/burial, but repentance
 - c. Primary sign is washing (Acts 22:16; Acts 2:38)
- 5. The early church practiced immersion.
 - a. Not exclusively or mainly
 - b. Didache (early Christian document c.70-100 A.D.):


But concerning baptism, baptize thus: Having first recited all these precepts, baptize in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit, in running water [river]; but if thou hast not running water, baptize in some other water, and if thou canst not baptize in cold, in warm water; but if thou hast neither, pour water three times on the head, in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit.
(Didache 7:1-3)

V. **RECIPIENTS** of Baptism: Who should be baptized?

- A. All believers (“believer’s baptism” or “credobaptism”: by creed/belief)
- B. And children of believers (“pedobaptism”: child)
 - i. Faith in Jesus is required first, and infants cannot profess faith!
 - 1. The OT sign of circumcision (the NT sign of the covenant) was preceded by Abraham’s faith (Rom. 4:11), but the sign was still to be put upon his eight-day-old children (Gen. 17:11-12).
 - 2. If one is *able* to profess faith (as an adult), he must profess faith in Christ before he may be baptized into Christ.
 - 3. Belief of one person in a house sets apart the household. (1 Cor. 7:14)
 - 4. “The promise is for you and your children” (Acts 2:38-39)
 - ii. The Bible never commands baptizing children
 - 1. The Bible never *forbids* baptizing children
 - a. “Household” baptisms when one in the house believes
 - i. Lydia’s household (Acts 16:15)
 - ii. Philippians Jailer’s household (Acts 16:33)
 - iii. Crispus’ household (Acts 18:8)
 - iv. Stephanus’ household (1 Cor. 1:16)
 - v. Abraham’s household all circumcised (Gen. 17:12,23)

2.  Argument from silence
 - a. If NT baptism replaced OT circumcision (which was a sign mainly upon children of believers), shouldn't there be an explicit command *not* to baptize kids in this new sign?
 - b. Paul gives lots of correctives in his letters on things like circumcision, sexual practice, worship habits, exercising of gifts, etc., but he never corrects baptism.
 - c. A few Christian writers in early centuries mention infant baptism (even writing against it), but not as if it is a new or obscure practice

"According to everyone's condition and disposition, and also his age, the delaying of baptism is more profitable, especially in the case of little children.... Let them become Christians when they [are] able to know Christ!"
 (Tertullian, *de baptismo*, ch. 16, c. 200 A.D.)

3.  Kids are considered part of the covenant community until they specifically abandon the covenant.
 - a. Kids must opt-out; Adults must opt-in.
 - b. We bring up our infants not as outsiders to be evangelized, but as insiders to be disciplined into faith.

VI. **QUESTIONS** on Baptism

- A. If the minister (or church) who baptized me is no longer professing Christ, is my baptism still valid?
 - i. YES. The effectiveness of baptism isn't tied to the one who administers it (WCF 28.6).
- B. If a person is baptized as a baby, but grows up to reject the faith, is he saved?
 - i. NO, not unless he returns to faith in Jesus. A person can be sealed as an heir of God's covenant promises and still reject (and lose) his inheritance.
- C. If I was baptized when I didn't believe, but now I do believe, should I be baptized again?
 - i. NO. Look upon your own baptism as God's faithfulness to His promises from long before you believed, to produce faith in you in His appointed time. And praise God!
- D. Should we baptize the dead, or anyone on behalf of the dead?
 - i. NO. Baptism itself can save neither the living nor the dead. Only once does Scripture perhaps mention a baptism for the dead (1 Cor. 15:29), but here Paul uses the obscure practice to make a point and in no way advocates for it.
- E. If baptism is a sign and seal of washing, why was Jesus baptized since He is sinless?
 - i. Jesus was baptized "to fulfill all righteousness" (Matt. 3:15). While He is indeed fully righteous and doesn't need cleansing, His baptism also points to the sign and seal of the cleansing promises of God for all God's people in union with Him.