

Heidelberg Catechism Q&A74 –Why you must baptize your baby

Brothers and sisters in Jesus Christ: Baptism is a **sensible sign that points you to the work of the Savior** on the cross. Baptism is **a seal God implants on your soul, assuring you your sins are washed away**. Baptism **must not be underestimated** as it is closely attached to your salvation, and it **must not be overestimated**, as if you were saved by it.

We have one more issue about baptism and it is this: Should your children be baptized? If you are a member here, you will say “yes.” But are you able to explain why your children should be baptized? I am going to attempt to give you the main points **why we do** and **why we must baptize our children**.

Our headings are:

Believers’ Children are included in the Covenant

Believers’ Children are given the Sign of the Covenant

Believers’ Children are distinguished from non-believers’ Children

Our goals are: **That you will know why your children are to be baptized, that you will praise God for his mark on your children, and that you will fulfill your responsibility by teaching your children to embrace God’s promises to them.**

74 Q. SHOULD INFANTS, TOO, BE BAPTIZED?

A. Yes. Infants as well as adults are in God’s covenant and are his people. They, no less than adults, **are promised the forgiveness of sin through Christ’s blood** and the Holy Spirit who produces faith.

Therefore, by baptism, the mark of the covenant, **infants should be received into the Christian church** and **should be distinguished from the children** of unbelievers. This was done in the Old Testament by circumcision, which was replaced in the New Testament by baptism.

Believers’ Children are included in the Covenant

1. God promised salvation to covenant children based on their parents’ faith and he incorporated them into the body of Christ.

2. Look at proof children of believers were incorporated in the covenant, promised the forgiveness of sins in Jesus Christ, and raised with the terms of the covenant.

a. God directly told Abraham his children were to be incorporated into the covenant and raised with this awareness.

Genesis 17:7...I will establish My covenant between Me and you and **your descendants after you** in their generations, for an everlasting covenant, **to be God to you** and **your descendants after you**. 9 And God said to Abraham: **"As for you, you shall keep My covenant,** you and **your descendants after you** throughout their generations.

Abraham had to teach his children. **The mere act of circumcision was not the covenant.** Abraham had to speak of Jesus, the ultimate **Covenant Keeper.** Yes, Abraham believed in Christ. (John 8; Romans 4)

b. The Covenant Keeper, Jesus, showed children were incorporated into the covenant when he put his hands on them and blessed them. He rebuked those who were trying to chase the children away. Also: **Mark 10:14, Luke 18:16.** He would not tolerate ill-treatment of his little ones...especially no ill-treatment of his children from his own disciples.

Matthew 19:14 But Jesus said, "Let the little children come to Me, and do not forbid them; for of **such is the kingdom of heaven.**" 15 And **He laid His hands on them and departed from there.**

This is recorded three times.

The Lord doesn't bless pagans with spiritual blessings.

c. Apostle Peter, quoting the OT, said covenant children were forgiven in Jesus and incorporated into the covenant.

Acts 2:38 ... "Repent, and let every one of you be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ **for the remission of sins;** and you shall receive the gift of the Holy Spirit. 39 **"For the promise is to you and to your children..."**

d. Apostle Paul showed children were included in the covenant and promised salvation.

Acts 16:31... "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and you will be saved, **you and your household.**"

Covenant children are not "vipers in diapers." Treat them as forgiven children and let them be baptized. This must be your starting presupposition. Don't act with doubts. **This is why the covenant sign was applied to them.** You act like you know and understand God's promises to them.

3. God directly addressed children as members of the covenant (and keepers of his covenant) when he gave the covenant law.

Exodus 20:12 "Honor your father and your mother, that your days may be long upon the land which the LORD your God is giving you.

Believer's Children were given the Covenant Sign

1. God marked those children who were incorporated into the body of Christ through their parents' faith with the sign of the covenant, circumcision in the Old Testament and baptism in the New Testament. Look at the New Testament's proof.
a. Lydia's family...and the Philippian jailer's- whole families were baptized.

Acts 16: 14 Now a certain woman named Lydia heard us. She was a seller of purple from the city of Thyatira, who worshiped God. The Lord opened her heart to heed the things spoken by Paul. 15 And when she and **her household were baptized...**

Acts 16:33 **And he took them the same hour of the night and washed their stripes. And immediately he and all his family were baptized.**

b. Apostle Peter's Words:

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

c. Apostle Paul's words:

1Corinthians 1:16 Yes, I also baptized the **household of Stephanas**. Besides, I do not know whether I baptized any other.

d. Consider other households that were baptized: Crispus' (Acts 18:8), and Gaius', and Stephanas' families. These families were people of God. **It would be incredulous if all these whole households had no children.**
e. Never, ever was it recorded in the Bible a child was baptized when he "came of age." When the parents believed, the children were baptized.

2. God pronounced excommunication or death on those children that did not have the covenant sign and incorporated into the covenant.

Genesis 17:14 "And the uncircumcised male child, **who is not circumcised in the flesh of his foreskin,** that person **shall be cut off from his people;** he has broken My covenant."

3. God was also going to kill Moses, Israel's deliverer from Egypt, for not giving the sign of the covenant to his son!

4. How can we address those who say some covenant children turn out to be wicked so we must not give them the covenant sign?

When a minister says "people of God," does he refer to every single person in the church? No! The church is never the "elected" ones only. **The church is God's covenant people. There are hypocrites in the church. Similarly, you can say covenant children are God's children, though some may turn out to be wicked.** So it was proper for Apostle Paul to assume children of believers are good and able to do good. (Ishmael and Esau turned out to be wicked covenant children.)

Ephesians 6:2 "Honor your father and mother," which is the first commandment with promise: 3 "**that it may be well with you** and you may live long on the earth."

And for a work to be good, **it must be done from faith in Christ**... Now one more verse proving children can do good!

Colossians 3:20 Children, obey your parents in all things, for this is well pleasing to the Lord.

5. How can we address those who say children can't be forgiven of their sins because young children do not have faith and cannot repent, and so they must not be baptized?

a. Forgiveness of sins is God's gift. Forgiveness is not based on what you do. **Suppose you did not confess all your sins before you died, does that mean you will be lost? Certainly not!** Like you, Christian children get their forgiveness through Christ's work, not through their own work.

b. Forgiveness is based on faith...and faith is present- the faith of the parents' of the children.

c. Old Testament children received the promise of forgiveness of sins, so why could they not receive it now? New Testament Christians, like Old Testament Christians and their children **had the same God**, they had the **same Gospel**, they had the **same faith**, they trusted in the **same Savior**, and they were in the **same church**. With all these things the same, it is logical to expect a covenantal sign to continue for believers and their children.

Believers' Children are Distinguished from Unbeliever's children

1. God revealed to Abraham the real difference between covenant children and non-covenant children and God gave a sign of the covenant to show that distinction.

God put covenant children in a special place-a privileged place where they are **taught of their sins, taught of the Savior, and taught to put their trust in him**. You can rightly **teach your children to sing and to pray**. If they weren't holy, **they would be condemned for attempting to worship and to pray without trusting in the sacrifice of Jesus**. But you are to teach your children to pray. Let them read his Word. **Sing with your children**: "*Jesus loves the little children*" and "*Jesus loves me this I know*." And claim the Lord's promise. Children of non-believers may not claim this! Further, **these children are in a place where they are disciplined also**. Amen?

2. God gave special protection to believers and their covenant children and killed non-covenant children.

On the night of the **Passover in Egypt, if a father put the Passover Lamb's blood on the door, the children were saved**. God did not let his covenant children die in Egypt. **Even wicked Ham was saved** from the flood on account of being in the covenant with his father Noah. **And what about Rahab and Zacchaeus whose families were saved?** Being in the covenant (and being circumcised) put them in a special place. Similarly, **believers and their children are in a special place**. You now have the full knowledge of what your Covenant Keeper did for you.

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

You can see the change of the covenant sign after the old sign was no longer appropriate. There was still need for a sign to mark the distinction between believers' and non-believer's children, but it is no

longer a bloody sign.

The covenant and the sign put children in a spiritually clean place and they are declared to be so.

3. Children are now in a covenant family where the blessings of the covenant members flow to each other.

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

If children were not baptized, it would mean children are in a worse place under the new covenant, even while God promises expanded the covenant to allow Gentiles in. **But covenant children are absolutely not treated in a worse way –but in a better way.** They are holy seed!

4. God taught covenant children and brought them peace.

He casts no pearls to swine. Peter taught that is Acts 2 above. Consider Isaiah's words:

Isaiah 54:13 All **your children shall be taught by the LORD**, And **great shall be the peace of your children.**

Conclusion:

Covenant children are part of the covenant people of God. God said so! God marked covenant children by a covenant sign so that they could join the church. From Abraham to the Lord Jesus, and to disciples after him, they all treated believers' children as being distinct from children of non-believers.

Brothers and Sisters in Jesus Christ:

1. Know what a precious covenant promise God has given to you and your children in your baptism. But this precious mark came at a great price. The **Lord Jesus had to perfectly obey** so you are credited with his obedience, and he **had to suffer and die and his blood flow to the ground for you** so God would be satisfied with your punishment.

2. Let this message comfort you and your children. He singled you out for salvation. He didn't have to. Rejoice! Great is his goodness!

3. Let this motivate you to serve the Lord in fullness. You are the chosen of God, but you are not the *frozen chosen*. **Spread the warmth of Christ's love** so others may see Christ in you and be drawn to him.

Finally, neither you nor your children can have eternal life without the sacrifice of Jesus for sins. May this day not pass before you call on him and ask him to make you and your children his children and receive his blessings! Without it you and your children are damned to hell for eternity. Don't leave that inheritance for your children.