

Belgic Confession 34 – Baptism – 3 Common Errors

Brothers and Sisters in Jesus Christ: You have seen why you should be baptized—you belong to Jesus. You have also heard the command to be baptized by Jesus. And you understand how you must be baptized— by sprinkling or pouring.

Today you will see 3 errors that are commonly taught regarding the sacrament of baptism.

Our headings are:

God baptizes believers, not man

God baptizes once, not twice

God baptizes children of believers

Our goals are: That you will learn how much God cherishes 珍惜 you and marks you as his own through Jesus, and that that will move you to live better as his covenant children.

God baptizes believers, not man

The ministers, therefore, on their part administer the sacrament and that which is visible, but our Lord gives that which is signified by the sacrament, namely, the gifts and invisible grace: washing, cleansing, and purging our souls of all filth and unrighteousness; renewing our hearts and filling them with all comfort; giving unto us a true assurance of His fatherly goodness; putting on us the new man, and putting off the old man with all his deeds因此，牧师执行圣礼是有形的，但主赐给圣礼所代表的，即无形的恩赐；洁净，洗除我们灵魂的一切污秽与不义；给我们一个新心，充满主的安慰；赐给我们真正的稳妥，保证父神的慈爱；叫我们披戴新人，脱去旧人的一切行为。

1. God marks believers in baptism, not man. Baptism is God's water mark on you showing you that you are in covenant with him—a covenant in which he entered with you through faith in Jesus Christ- by your personal faith or the faith of your parents.

God is the initiator 启动者 in baptism. He determined the terms of the covenant. He declared what the blessings and curses would be. He determined what the sign would be and what would be signified by the sign. He gave invisible grace. He cleaned out your soul of filth. He renewed your heart. He comforts you through sacraments. He gives you assurance by his Spirit that you belong to him and that he is good to you. And after baptism he continues to clean you out. The focus of your baptism is God's work!

2. Question: Why couldn't you be the initiator of the covenant and of baptism? Answer: You did not want to seek God. You could not do any good. You were a failure after your first father Adam. The new covenant and the sign came to you through your new federal head, Jesus, your new Covenant Keeper who perfectly kept the covenant for you. He didn't ask you first if you would believe. He took the initiative. You have a special relationship with your covenant God because of Christ's work and are in a special place because of what he did. So the handicapped or infants 婴孩 are not left out of heaven and God's kingdom because they are unable to make a clear confession. The focus in baptism is what Christ did for you! Christ could give salvation without a confession.

3. The Baptist then takes an Arminian position when he puts the emphasis on “my choice” in baptism, rather than on the work of Jesus Christ. And he has to take the position that the child or the mentally incapable person, because he can't give consent, is necessarily lost to hell, and must not be baptized. Thankfully, God is not as mean as Baptist theology.

God baptizes once, not twice

We believe, therefore, that every man who is earnestly studious of obtaining life eternal ought to be baptized but once with this only baptism, without ever repeating the same, since we cannot be born twice. Neither does this baptism avail us only at the time when the water is poured upon us and received by us, but also through the whole course of our life.

Therefore we detest the error of the Anabaptists, who are not content with the one only baptism they have once received, 因此，我们相信凡真心寻求永生的人，应当受洗一次，不必再重覆；因为我们不能生两次，这洗礼不仅今世在浇水与受洗时对我们有益，而且终生也有益。因此我们反对重洗派，他们认为受洗一次不够，

1. The Baptist rejects covenant (family) baptism and the Baptist rejects any baptism other than immersion 浸礼. So if you who were baptized at New Horizon as an adult and you attempted to become a member of a Baptist church they would require you be baptized again. If you refuse, you will be refused. And if you were baptized as an infant here and wanted to

be a professing member in the Baptist church, you will have to be baptized again. But a second baptism is 100% useless. It has no merit 功劳 before the Father. More than being merely useless, **to submit yourself to rebaptism is a serious sin.**

- 2. Consider the reason that it is sinful to submit yourself to rebaptism (which is only done by immersion).** You have seen already that immersion is not the prescribed method of baptism in the Bible. But the sin of rebaptism is in this:
- a. Since you are only reborn once and then baptized, to be baptized again is minimizing the power of the work of Jesus Christ.** It is like attempting to be reborn – twice. It is attacking the once for all times sacrifice of Jesus. So you must hate rebaptism as a policy. Though sinning is not the intention of the Baptism, it is an outcome of their action.
- b. Since you may have been baptized as an infant based on the faith of your covenant head, to be baptized again is to show contempt for the federal head, your parent.** It is saying that you were not in a precious position before you attempted to join the Baptist church.

- 3. Baptism is not limited in its effects to the time the water is poured or sprinkled, but throughout the course of life. So repeating it makes no sense.**

God baptizes children of Believers

...and moreover condemn the baptism of the **infants of believers**, who we believe ought to be baptized and **sealed with the sign of the covenant**, as the children in Israel formerly were circumcised upon the **same promises which are made unto our children**. And indeed Christ shed **His blood no less for the washing of the children of believers** than for adult persons; and therefore they ought to receive the sign and sacrament of that which Christ has done for them; as the Lord commanded in the law that they should be made partakers of the sacrament of Christ's suffering and death shortly after they were born, by offering for them a lamb, which was a sacrament of Jesus Christ. Moreover, what circumcision was to the Jews, baptism is to our children. And for this reason St. Paul calls baptism the circumcision of Christ 还反对像我们相信的婴儿洗礼, 但我们认为婴儿也应当受洗, 正如以色列人的孩童受割礼一样, 这同样的应许, 也应验在我们孩童的身上. 基督流血洗净成人的罪, 也照样洗净孩童的罪; 因此他们应当接受基督为他们所成就的圣礼, 正如主在律法中所吩咐的, 在他们出生后, 他们应当有分于基督的受苦与受死的圣礼, 为他们献上一只羊羔, 即耶稣基督的献祭. 此外, 割礼之对以色列人, 正如洗礼之对于我们的儿童. 为此缘故, 保罗称洗礼为基督的割礼.

- 1. The Bible teaches that believers and their children ought to be marked with the sign and seal of the covenant.** This must be the starting presupposition 前设 in the Bible. This was what God commanded Abraham, the father of all believers to do – and all our consequent forefathers. God was very angry when his covenant people did not apply the sign of the covenant to their children. He pronounced curses on those who did not circumcise 割礼 their children and on the children themselves who were not circumcised. God was about to kill Moses for not circumcising his son. Exodus 4:24-25. His wife saved him.

Genesis 17:11 "and **you shall be circumcised in the flesh of your foreskins**, and it shall be a sign of the covenant between Me and you.

Applying the sign of the covenant was **not a suggestion to Abraham**. It was an explicit command.

- 2. A sign of the covenant continues for children.** (Last week you saw how baptism – the non-blood sign- replaced the bloody sign of circumcision which was fulfilled in Jesus.) The sign was not removed from anyone. God's kingdom is always expanding so you can see it applying to more – like girls and Gentiles – not less. There is no evidence of a discontinuity of a sign.

- 3. Children today have the same promise as children of the OT.** God promised the forgiveness of sins through the blood of Jesus to them and their parents. It was the **same blood that washed away Isaac's** sins that washed away yours and your children's sins. **Covenant children are people of God through the forgiveness of sins – forgiveness that only comes through Jesus Christ.** So when the Jewish boys were circumcised they were raised with an awareness of their sins, and their forgiveness through their Covenant Keeper. This is the same promise covenant children have today.

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.**

Acts 2:38 ... "Repent, and let every one of you be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins 使你们的罪得赦; and you shall receive the gift of the Holy Spirit. 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."

- 4. Children's parents today have the same faith as parents of the OT. This faith caused the inclusion and incorporation of parents and children into the covenant community.** BTW, this is why Christian parents who have children who die in infancy or in the womb do not have to worry about their children being saved. Didn't God condemn **children for the sins of their first parents?** Weren't **children condemned in Adam without their consent**...not having committed a single sin? Logically then, why couldn't God similarly save children on account of their parents' faith? Didn't God save **Jewish children without**

their consent because their parents put the Passover blood on their doors? Did God not **save Rahab's family because of Rahab's faith?** Didn't **God save Ham because of Noah's faith?** Christian children are **called holy seed**.

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**.

Those who argue against God possibly saving children are horribly limiting God's hand. (Some of those who believe that children can't be saved by virtue of their parents' faith still believe that young children will go to heaven when they die because they are innocent. **That is perverse** 倒行逆施. **That is denying total depravity** 完全堕落.) There is only one way to be saved – through faith in Jesus.

Furthermore, you who are baptized will still have unconfessed sin in your life when you die. Do you think you will go to hell because you haven't confessed all your sins? Surely you will be saved because you believe in Jesus.

5. Children today are part of the same church as Old Testament children. Ephesians 2-3 proves this point.

In Zechariah 10, you see children living as part of the church.

Zechariah 10:7 Those of Ephraim shall be like a mighty man, And their heart shall rejoice as if with wine.

Yes, **their children shall see it and be glad; Their heart shall rejoice in the LORD.**

How did the Baptist come to this view that only adults must be baptized? He heard that you must believe and be baptized. But belief for the adult **also preceded circumcision in the OT**, and **yet children received the sign also**. The only way around this is dispensationalism...which is the false teaching that people were saved in a different way in the OT. Only in this way the Baptist can argue for changes regarding the covenant sign.

6. Children today are confirmed as part of the same covenant and as receiving the covenant sign.

a. **Jesus embraced children AND blessed them.** Mk 10:14, Lk 18:16. Only his children receive special blessings.

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.

b. **God directly addressed children in the covenant and promised them blessing for doing good.** Only believers can do good. (Honor your father and your mother that you days may be long upon the land...)

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."

c. **Households (which included children) were always baptized, as households were circumcised.** Lydia, the Philippian jailer, Gaius, Crispus, and Stephanas' families were baptized.

7. Theological argument: God made the family the center of the covenant. Since children are in the family, they are included in the covenant and distinct from the world. Covenant blessings in the family flow to the other members. You can rightly teach your children to sing and to pray. If they aren't holy, they should be condemned for attempting to worship and to pray without sacrifice. **But Baptists don't stop them, because they are holy.** Thankfully, they are not consistent.

8. There is one other major objection against infant baptism. They say that they fear that their child may reject God later in life. But even adults who are baptized reject God and yet they are baptized. You know of others who were baptized and rejected the faith. **If children reject God's covenant later, then they incur a severer** 更严重 **judgment.** They will have to take full responsibility for their sins.

Covenant doesn't mean salvation.

To combat this fear, parents must **teach their children to make their "calling and election sure."** Teach them to tarry in the Word of God, bruise their knees in prayer, and tire their lips with speaking of God's truth. Teach them to be dedicated to the Lord, mortify 至死 their flesh, and lead God-fearing lives.

Conclusion:

God marks the believer in baptism. He marks him as his property. He marks him on his soul. Man submits to baptism. This baptism, because it signifies the once for all times sacrifice of Jesus, must only be done once. And believers and their children ought to be baptized because they are part of the covenant community.

Brothers and Sisters in Jesus Christ:

1. Thank the Lord for marking you and your children in holy baptism. Remember what that baptism means to you...remember all that Christ has done... for his election, to his crucifixion 钉十字架, and his regeneration 重生 of your soul.

2. If you know of someone with unbaptized children, warn them of the dangerous place they are placing their children. Encourage them to study the issue so they can come to the truth.

Finally: If you are not in covenant with the Lord, you are in covenant with the Devil. God will do what is good. The Devil will do what is evil. You might feel contented, but the Devil's way is the way to hell. May you beg God to turn you around. He will do so if you ask through Jesus.