

Biblical Topics

Baptism – Nature of Baptism

What is Baptism?

Baptism is not just plain water, but it is the water included in God's command and combined with God's Word.

Which is that word of God?

Christ our Lord says in the last chapter of Matthew: "Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit. Matthew 28:19"

The word "baptize is derived from the Greek "baptizein," which means to dip in or under water. It does not depend upon the amount of water used, nor upon where and how it is applied.

Baptism is not simple water only:

- A. Because in Baptism water is used by a special command.
- B. Because the water applied in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and is thereby connected with God's Word. This means that by Baptism I have been received into communion with the Triune God. That makes me a partaker of all His blessings.

Baptizing "all nations" includes men, women and children. The Baptism which Christ instituted should not be administered to lifeless things, to dead persons or to animals.

Infants, too, are to be baptized...

- A. Because they are included in the words "all nations." Though little children are not expressly mentioned, neither are men and women – they are a part of "all nations."
 - Matthew 28:19: Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit,
 - Acts 2:38-39: ³⁸ Peter replied, "Repent and be baptized, every one of you, in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins. And you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit. ³⁹ The promise is for you and your children and for all who are far off—for all whom the Lord our God will call."
- B. Because Holy Baptism is the only means whereby infants, who, too, must be born again, can ordinarily be regenerated and brought to faith. The Greek text has not the word "man," but the indefinite pronoun "one," or any one, therefore children also should be baptized. In the OT little children were circumcised when they were eight days old. This allowed them to receive the covenant of God's grace.

- Mark 10:13-15: ¹³ People were bringing little children to Jesus to have him touch them, but the disciples rebuked them. ¹⁴ When Jesus saw this, he was indignant. He said to them, “Let the little children come to me, and do not hinder them, for the kingdom of God belongs to such as these. ¹⁵ I tell you the truth, anyone who will not receive the kingdom of God like a little child will never enter it.”
- John 3:5-6: ⁵ Jesus answered, “I tell you the truth, no one can enter the kingdom of God unless he is born of water and the Spirit. ⁶ Flesh gives birth to flesh, but the Spirit gives birth to spirit.

C. Because infants, too, can believe. The assertion that little children are not conscious of their faith does not prove that they have no faith; neither is an infant conscious of his life, yet he lives.

- Matthew 18:6: But if anyone causes one of these little ones who believe in me to sin, it would be better for him to have a large millstone hung around his neck and to be drowned in the depths of the sea.

The right and duty to baptize was given to all Christians, the whole Church, and each local congregation. In the congregation is done by the called minister. An emergency Baptism by a lay Christian is just as valid and good as one performed by a called minister.

The purpose of have sponsors is:

- A. To testify that the children have been properly baptized. As a child grows up, sponsors should assure him/her of the fact of his/her baptism.
- B. To assist in caring for the Christian education and training of their godchildren, especially if these children should lose their parents. Only persons of the Lutheran faith should in our church be taken for sponsors.
- C. To pray for them. The Baptism of a child is a very sacred and important matter. It should not be treated lightly, regarding it merely as a name-giving ceremony. All those present at the Baptism should know that here God is receiving this child into the covenant of His grace, and they should all pray for the child.

To reject Baptism is to reject Christ Himself. The Christian Church is by Christ commanded to baptize and it has no right to discontinue this Sacrament.

The above information is taken from: “Luther’s Small Catechism” annotated by Edward W. A. Koehler.