

Infant vs believers  
baptism theology  
religion essay



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The Interpreters Dictionary of the Bible argues that baptism is a rite using water as a symbol of religious purification. The origin of Christian baptism is to be found within Judaism, and it is improbable to suggest the derivation of the Christian rite from the mystery cults. At first term “ baptism” meant the provision of cultic purity, and then in the NT it was extended to express the complete renewal of human existence. The rite of baptism with water as a symbol of entry into the Christian community was practiced from the day of Pentecost. The Interpreter’s Dictionary of the Bible links baptism with repentance and with the reception of the Holy Spirit. The fullest NT exposition of the meaning of baptism is to be found in the Pauline letters. Paul teaches that baptism is the means of incorporation into the Christian community, which is the body of Christ; through baptism the Spirit is received, and the barriers that divide men, whether of race or of class, are thus overcome (1 Cor. 12: 12-13). At the same time, John administered a “ repentance-baptism for the forgiveness of sins” (Mk. 1: 4) in anticipation of the baptism of Spirit and the fire that the Messiah would exercise (The Interpreter’s Dictionary of the Bible, 1962).

Christian baptism is rooted in the redemptive action of Jesus. The command to baptize falls of necessity in the resurrection era, when redemption has been achieved, universal authority accorded to the risen Lord, and the mission of the church to the world begun (The Dictionary of New Testament Theology, 1989). Baptism seems to have accompanied the proclamation of the gospel from the beginning of the church’s mission. According to the Dictionary of New Testament Theology baptism is administered “ in the

name of Jesus Christ"; it is " for the forgiveness of sins" and with a view to the gift of the Holy Spirit.

Personally for me, baptism is a very intimate topic. I was baptized, when I was an infant. Actually, everybody in my family was baptized in the early childhood. My mother is a proponent of infant baptizing, as she supposes that children should be taught about Christian living from the time they are born and during their entire life. Her argument is that we are all God's children and there is no need to wait to become a real Christian. Parents should foster love for God and Bible in children in order to be thankful to God for His tremendous grace, generosity and love He has for us. I also see baptizing as the sign of love and repentance. Moreover, I'm thankful to my parents for their decision to baptize me as an infant, as I lived my entire life with the Christian living in my mind.

We need to understand the doctrine of baptism in order to live a faithful Christian life. Moreover, the understanding of the doctrine of Baptism is needed as it has a great influence in the church today. When people are baptized, they identify themselves with Christ's death, burial and resurrection (Stringer, M. D., 2005). The proof for such an assumption can be seen in Romans 6: 3-4: " Or don't you know that all of us who were baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into his death? We were therefore buried with him through baptism into death in order that, just as Christ was raised from the dead through the glory of the Father, we too may live a new life." So, baptism is an important rite, which signifies our " new life" in Jesus Christ. Moreover, we should understand infant baptizing, as this concept suggests being a Christian from the time of birth till death.

Infant baptizing is the best view on the doctrine of baptism, as it provides the opportunity of faithful living in Jesus Christ from the early childhood.

Infant baptism should be undertaken in order to foster love for God, faith, repentance and living by Ten Commandments in children since early childhood.

There are two main views on the time, when the person should be baptized: credobaptism and paedobaptism. According to Christian Apologetics and Research Ministry, credobaptism is the practice of baptizing only those who are able to make a profession of faith. Credobaptism is also called Believer's baptism. Credobaptists are the proponents of the baptism by immersion. Believer's baptism view is based on the assumption that baptism should be given: 1) to all those who have learned repentance and amendment of life; 2) who believe truly that their sins are taken away by Christ; 3) to all those who walk in the resurrection of Jesus Christ, and wish to be buried with him in death, so that they may be resurrected with him; 4) to all those who with this significance request baptism of us and demand it for themselves (Baptist Roots: a Reader in the Theology of a Christian People, 1999.). Moreover, the proponents of believer's baptism argue that there is no direct evidence in the NT for the baptism of infants. Moreover, during the time of the NT only adults were baptized, when they showed their faith and repentance.

Moreover, the proponents of believer's baptizing argue that linguistically the word " baptism" means immersion and indirectly implies that baptism is not for infants. Another argument in favor of believer's baptism is that whenever baptisms are recorded, the text always specifies that the baptized come up out of the water, again demonstrating baptism by immersion (Wright, D. F. et

all, 2009). Moreover, in Romans 6: 3-4 and Colossians 2: 12 baptism pictures the believer's death to the old life and regeneration and conversion to newness of life. The proponents of believer's baptizing argue that being plunged under the water and raised up from the water symbolizes the spiritual reality, a reality that is only possible for believers who are trusting in Christ and indwelt by the Spirit.

According to Christian Apologetics and Research Ministry, paedobaptism is the practice of baptizing infants. The first explicit reference to infant baptism in Christian history is that made by Irenaeus, about A. D. 180, who speaks of "all who through Christ are born again to God, infants and children and boys and youths and old men", "born again to God" being a technical phrase meaning baptism (Dictionary of New Testament Theology, 1989). The belief that the apostles commanded the baptism of infants as well as of responsible persons is attested as early as Origen (3rd century A. D.), and apart from some notable exceptions it became the unquestioned conviction of Christendom until the present century. The proponents of the paedobaptism argue that despite the lack of direct evidence of the infant baptism in the NT, the indirect evidence of infant baptism can be read in various lines of the NT. The proponents of infant baptism argue that baptism in the NT is closely related to the circumcision in the OT. J. Jeremias has argued that Paul may have been instrumental in thus putting forward baptism as the Christian equivalent of Jewish circumcision (Colossians 2: 11-12). Moreover, the argument for infant baptism states that the NT has a lot of evidence for household baptism and according to the evidence found in Stauffer, in the

contemporary use of the word “household” young children were specifically included (Wright, D. F. et al, 2009).

I am the proponent of infant baptizing, as I see this type of baptizing more reasonable within the Christian theology. I suppose that people should be baptized as infants, so that they can become Christians, be taught about faith, love and repentance, and in order to give them an opportunity to live a consistent Christian life.

The most influential argument for infant baptism is the relationship between the circumcision in the OT and the baptism in the NT. In order to understand, how these sacraments relate, we should conduct a deep analysis. The Scripture teaches that baptism signifies the forgiveness and purification from sins, and spiritual resurrection. The Scripture also says that we are baptized in Jesus Christ. Moreover, baptism is seal with which we witness that the Lord is our God and that we are His people. The OT says that the Lord wants to be Abraham’s God and God of his descendant by giving the covenant of circumcision. Moreover, the Lord says that He wants to see Abraham to be in wholeness and immaculacy. Here we can see that death and resurrection are implied in circumcision. So, the circumcision is the same as baptism, as they both include the promise of the forgiveness of sins and the resurrection after the death. Jesus Christ is the basis for both circumcision and baptism, as He represents the fulfillment of the Promise. Now the conclusion can be made that everything what belongs to circumcision, belongs to baptism as well (except the visual rite). The Lord demands the circumcision of the infants in Genesis 17: 12: “For the generations to come every male among you who is eight days old must be circumcised, including those born in your household

or bought with money from a foreigner-those who are not your offspring.” So, thanks to the established relationship between circumcision and baptism it is reasonable to suggest, that the circumcision of the infants relate to infant baptism.

Another argument for infant baptism can be derived from Luke 18: 15-16, where Jesus states: “ let the little children come to me, and do not hinder them, for the kingdom of God belongs to such as these”. If Jesus allows infants to come to Him, in such a way he allows infant baptism as this is the sign of our communication and connection with Jesus Christ. The opponents of infant baptism argue that Jesus Christ invited grown up children but mistakenly called them “ infants”, as He asked them to come to Him.

However, this argument is disproved, as the Scripture refers infants to the children, who should be carried in the arms. So, in these verse we should understand the verb “ to come” in the meaning of the verb “ to approach”.

Another argument against infant baptism is that Luke 18: 15-16 says that the kingdom of God belongs to “ such as these (infants)” but not to “ these (infants)”. However, this argument is easily and logically disproven, as Jesus’s reason for allowing infants to approach Him is that the kingdom of God belongs to them. This verse should be interpreted as “... for the kingdom of God belongs to these and such as these”.

The passage of Luke 18: 15-17 is crucial to the understanding of infant baptism. Luke 18: 15 : “ People were also bringing babies to Jesus for him to place his hands on them. When the disciples saw this, they rebuked them.”

According to Clarke’s Commentary, it was a common custom among the Jews to lay their hands on the heads of those whom they blessed, or for

whom they prayed. This seems to have been done by way of dedication or consecration to God – the person being considered as the sacred property of God even after. Often God added a testimony of his approbation, by communicating some extraordinary influence on the Holy Spirit. This rite has been long practiced among Christians, when persons are appointed to any sacred office. However, the consecration of children to God has grown out of use. The second part of the verse can be interpreted from the view that the disciples rebuked the parents, as they considered infants too young to receive good. Luke 18: 16-17: “ But Jesus called the children to him and said, “ Let the little children come to me, and do not hinder them, for the kingdom of God belongs to such as these.” Truly I tell you, anyone who will not receive the kingdom of God like a little child will never enter it.” This verse shows that Christ loves infants’ simplicity and innocence. According to Clarke’s Commentary, Jesus has sanctified infants’ very age by passing through it himself – the holy Jesus was once a little child. Moreover, Jesus’s emphasis on the big part of the kingdom of God composed of such should be taken literally; and only those who resemble little children should be received into it. According to Commentary on the Whole Bible, in these two verses our Lord meant to inform us, that seeing grown people must become childlike in order to be capable of the Kingdom of God, therefore they should not hinder infants from coming to Him, and therefore He took up and blessed the infants themselves.

All in all Jesus’ words about little children provide an example of the attitude essential for receiving God’s grace. Childlike qualities such as trust, openness, and the absence of holier-than-thou attitudes are presented in this



view. This shows that Jesus had compassion even on infants too young to understand the difference between right and wrong (The Expositor's Bible Commentary, 1984). This passage indirectly bears on question of infant baptism.

The major argument of the opponents of infant baptism is the fact that people should be baptized after conscious understanding of the responsibility they take. Moreover, they argue that people should be baptized after they acknowledge their faith. However, the opponents of infant baptism argue that leaving an infant until the time, when he/she will acknowledge his/her faith, means leaving the infants to be "the children of Adam" for a period of time. We experience death in Adam, because of the original sin. However, Jesus allows infants to approach Him, which means He wants to establish connection with them in order to revive them (Luke 18: 15-16).

Infant baptizing is the best view on the doctrine of baptism, as it provides the opportunity of faithful living in Jesus Christ from the early childhood. The NT indirectly supports infant baptism. As baptism is the same as circumcision (except the visual rite), then infant baptism is allowed and appreciated by God (Colossians 2: 11-12; Acts 16: 33). Moreover, Luke 18: 15-16 proves that Jesus Christ allowed infant baptism, by calling the infants to approach Him. The baptism of household, which is mentioned all over the NT, implicitly means infant baptizing, as in the contemporary use of the word "household" young children were specifically included.

The doctrine of infant baptism perfectly fits in other related doctrines: the doctrine of circumcision, the doctrine of faith, the doctrine of repentance, the doctrine of forgiveness and the doctrine of resurrection. It doesn't really contradict with any of these doctrines. The doctrine of circumcision is very similar to the doctrine of infant baptism, as the basis for them is Jesus Christ, who is seen as the fulfillment of the Promise. The doctrine of faith, repentance, forgiveness and resurrection perfectly fits in the definition of infant baptism: infants are baptized to be forgiven for sins, purified and be spiritually resurrected. Moreover, infant baptism encourages Christian living full of faith and repentance. The significance of the doctrine of infant baptism is the removal of the original sin from the infants. In such a way children may possess the relationship with Christ since early childhood. Infant baptizing can make a difference for Christian life in a way it allows the children to be under Christ's influence and care since birth. Children are purified and become "new born" Christians, who need to be taught about love for God, faith, repentance and living by Ten Commandments. These doctrines are best understood and learned, when taught since childhood. I suppose that infant baptism can bring more true believers to the church.