

## THE SACRAMENT OF BAPTISM



*A Washing of Regeneration in the Holy Spirit.*

**T**HE WORD "SACRAMENT" has been understood in many different ways by many different religious groups. Maybe it would be good for us to state clearly, right now, what we mean when we use that term:

*"A Sacrament is a holy act which...*

- was instituted by Christ*
- uses earthly elements connected with God's Word*
- offers and gives us God's forgiveness"*

It is a sad fact that many Christians disagree on how Baptism is to be applied, how much water should be used, and (most important) what Baptism really does for the person baptized. The Bible is very clear on all these points, and we are to be careful to say neither more nor less than what God tells us.

### How is Baptism to be Applied?


1. Acts 8:26-38 is the account of how an officer of the Ethiopian court believed the Gospel and was baptized by Philip. Especially from verse 38, *how was the water applied to the Ethiopian?*

2. Mark 7:4 may tell us something about how the word "baptize" was used in Jesus' day. This passage doesn't describe the Sacrament of Baptism, but the word used here for "wash" (Greek *baptizo*) is the same word. Some people think the word always meant to *immerse* - that is, to dunk something or someone all the way under the water, but this passage would seem to argue against that. *Which item mentioned here would probably NOT be dunked all the way under the water?*

#### ICON KEY

 Introduction

 Important point

 For further reading

## "LEARN FROM ME"

3. The same Greek word for "wash" - *baptizo* - is used in Luke 11:38. *Which do you think it means in this verse - to immerse, or simply to apply water?*

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As you have probably noticed by now, the Jews used their word "baptize" to mean a washing (Hebrews 9:10). It was a very general term which included the various uses for water, such as washing the hands before and during meals. Scripture is clear that the *use* of water is important, but the *amount* of water used is not vital. Those who insist that Baptism is not valid unless the person is dunked all the way under the water are saying more than God's Word says.

### Where Does Baptism Get its Power?

4. Ephesians 5:25-26 contains another reference to Baptism. According to verse 26 *what all-important factor is always connected to the water in Baptism?*

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5. Read Acts 22:16. *Whose name are Christians to call upon when they baptize?*

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6. Read Matthew 28:19, Jesus' "Great Commission" to His disciples. *In Whose name are we to baptize?*

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### What Does Baptism Do?

7. Look up Titus 3:5-7. *What does this verse say about the "washing" of Baptism?*

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8. *How does the Apostle Paul describe Baptism in Galatians 3:26-27?*

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9. Read once again the conversation which Jesus had with the Pharisee, Nicodemus (John 3:1-21). Jesus thought much of Baptism. *So much so, that in verse 5 He calls it a means of entering WHAT?*

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10. Read 1 Peter 3:18-21. *How were the waters of the Flood like Baptism?*

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**"LEARN FROM ME"**

11. According to the first part of verse 21, *what does Baptism do for us?*

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12. The second part of verse 21 says that:

*Baptism does NOT get rid of WHAT?* \_\_\_\_\_

*But it DOES provide a Christian with WHAT?* \_\_\_\_\_



The only thing that can provide us with a good conscience is *faith* - faith which trusts that Jesus Christ has redeemed us from all our sins. The Holy Spirit works faith through the Sacrament of Holy Baptism.

## **What About Babies?**

Mark 16:16 says "*He who believes and is baptized will be saved.*" Our church baptizes even the youngest children - newborn babies. Many churches say this is wrong. Should we baptize babies or not? Let's see what the Bible says.

13. Read Acts 2:38-41. This is part of what happened in Jerusalem on the day of Pentecost - many people heard the disciples preach about Jesus. From verse 38, *what did Peter tell the crowd to do in order to be saved?*

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*Whom did Peter say the promise of salvation was for?*

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14. Look up Matthew 28:19 again. *Whom does Jesus say should be baptized? Whom does that include?*

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Point One: WE BAPTIZE BABIES BECAUSE THEY TOO ARE PART OF "ALL NATIONS."

15. Read again John 3:5-6. *Who does Jesus say should be baptized? Anyone who wants to enter WHAT?*

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16. Read Psalm 51:5. *At what point in his life is a person responsible for sin and in need of forgiveness?*

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## "LEARN FROM ME"

Point Two: WE BAPTIZE BABIES BECAUSE THEY, TOO, ARE SINFUL AND IN NEED OF FORGIVENESS.

The Reformed churches (Baptist, Methodist, Presbyterian, etc.) teach that baptism is wrong for babies because babies aren't old enough to believe about Jesus. And that objection might seem to make sense to our human reason. But what does the Bible say? Can babies have faith?

17. Look up and read Luke 18:15-17. Jesus' disciples were trying to get rid of a group of mothers who were bringing their children to Jesus. *But what did Jesus say to His disciples (verse 16)?*

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18. *How old were the children?* \_\_\_\_\_

Jesus not only encouraged people to bring children to Him, He even said, "*of such is the kingdom of God!*"

19. Read Matthew 18:1-6. Jesus here even used a little child as example of how *everyone* should have faith! Can even little children believe in Jesus? *Fill in Jesus' words from verse 6: "One of these little ones who..."*

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Point Three: WE BAPTIZE LITTLE BABIES BECAUSE THEY, TOO, CAN BELIEVE.

## Christians are Bound by Baptism, God is Not

The question often comes up: can anyone be saved *without* Baptism?

20. Read the account of the thief who died on the cross next to Jesus (Luke 23:39-43). This man, a career criminal, was no doubt an unbeliever before that day. He certainly had no opportunity to be baptized. *But what did Jesus say to him before he died?*

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21. Read again Mark 16:16. Baptism is a wonderful sacrament that every Christian will desire for himself and for his children. But according to the second half of this verse, *which people ONLY will be condemned on the Day of Judgment?*

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22. Look up Luke 7:29-30. John the Baptist preached the Good News about Jesus, and baptized many people in the river Jordan. But this passage says that the Pharisees were not saved. *Why? Was it because they had not been baptized?*

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In Scripture, our Lord binds us Christians to the Sacrament of Holy Baptism. No believer would want to omit taking advantage of this tremendous blessing. On the other hand, our Lord is *not* bound to Baptism. He may save even without it.

## Who Shall Perform Baptism?

23. Once more, look at Matthew 28:19, the words with which Christ first commanded baptism. *To whom does Jesus give this gracious command?*

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24. All Christians are commanded to preach the Gospel, and indeed to baptize. But read 1 Corinthians 14:40. This passage speaks of the general assembly of Christians. *Why would this passage prompt Christians to ask the pastor to do the baptizing under normal circumstances?*

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To maintain good order in the church, the pastor normally carries out baptism in the name of the congregation. But in cases of emergency, *any* Christian can and should baptize. That is why the last page in *The Lutheran Hymnal* (Concordia, 1941) contains an emergency form for Baptism. In its simplest form, any Christian can carry out the Sacrament of Holy Baptism, simply by sprinkling water on the child's head, calling the child by name, and saying, "I baptize you in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit." Would *you* be ready if the situation ever arose?

Many of us were baptized as infants, long ago. But that doesn't mean that Baptism has no significance for us now. Just the opposite! How can Baptism help us in our daily lives?

25. Read Isaiah 54:10. *What will happen before God breaks the covenant He made with you at your Baptism?*

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26. Look up Galatians 3:26-27. *What comfort does this passage offer to the Christian who feels his faith is weak?*

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27. Read Romans 6:4. *How is the life of a baptized believer like the resurrection of Christ?*

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The custom of selecting "sponsors" for the person to be baptized was begun in the early church, when being a Christian meant a threat to life and limb. That is why fellow-Christians would promise to see to it that the newly-baptized would be brought up in the true Christian faith, even if the parents should be put to death for their faith. We should remember that, while sponsorship is a fine custom, it is not commanded in the Bible. Parents will always want to select sponsors for their children from among those who share their Christian faith - you wouldn't ask a Baptist, e.g., to promise that he will "...bring up the child in the true Lutheran faith." That wouldn't make much sense. When those not of our fellowship stand up at a Baptism they do so as witnesses, not sponsors.

Faithful sponsors will pray for the child, and generally lend their advice and help (especially if the child should lose his parents), so that the child will be reminded of his baptism and aided in his thorough Christian training in church and school.

## **Additional Bible Readings**



For additional reading: The apostles baptized whole families - Acts 16:15,33, Acts 18:8, 1 Corinthians 1:16. See also Romans 6:3-13.