

## Two Primary Concerns Driving Early Baptisms

It is important when speaking to parents about the Baptism of children to address the two primary reasons driving them to push for the baptism of their children. First, is a fear that their child, if not baptized as an infant, will go to hell, should he die. The second is the fear, that the child, if not baptized while young and impressionable, will at a later time, lose interest and never get around to being baptized. Both these erroneous fears have their roots in doctrine. Correct doctrine needs to be mastered by those who do not have children or whose children are grown as the issues are far broader than baptism. Wrong doctrine concerning children, the call of God and the saving nature of salvation is simply most clearly manifested in the issue of baptism but in reality affects many more important aspects of life and faith than this. They are therefore presented below...

### I. Children Who Die Young

A. Age of Accountability – although this term is not specifically mentioned in the scripture, the concept is clearly presented.

1. Deuteronomy 1:39
2. Isaiah 7:15
3. I Kings 14:12 & 13
4. Jeremiah 19:4

B. God's Special Ownership of Children – notice in each passage, to whom does God ascribe ownership of children?

1. Ezekiel 16:21
2. Matthew 18:12 – 14
3. Luke 18:16

C. The reoccurring phrase, “better to die young” – if infants went to hell, then this reoccurring phrase would not occur. Instead we would see the phrase, “at least I did not die young”.

1. Job 3:11 – 13
2. Ecclesiastes 6:3

D. There Are Many Aspects of Grace Which We Do Not Fully Understand But Accept

1. Angels – Exist after the fall. All creation fell with Adam, yet angels are part of the elect of God, yet not by Christ
2. Those who died before Christ, are saved by the Work of Christ, yet a future work for them.
3. Those who die after Christ, are saved by the Work of Christ, yet they had never lived.
4. Each instance is explained in Scripture but beyond our comprehension. It is the same with children who die young, it is explained, the seeming discrepancies have to do with our finite minds, not the justice of God.

E. David's Statement Concerning His Child and Heaven – if the child were going to hell, then David would not have expressed an assurance of a reunion.

1. II Samuel 12:22 & 23

F. Since the salvation of these children is secure there is not need to obsess over religious rituals to comfort our heart. Rather we should take comfort in the Word of God. It is not the dedication Bible, the Baptismal certificate, the pressed rose or another symbol which should give us comfort. Rather the firm assurance we have from the Word of God, the trust in the Sovereignty of God and the bedrock conviction that we serve a good and wise Father, which should give us comfort.

## II. Strike While The Iron Is Hot

- A. If we do not act now, the time may come when our children are not interested in spiritual things.
- B. Make several erroneous presuppositions -
  - 1. Ritual washings result in salvation – Titus 3:5; I Peter 3:21 & 22
  - 2. Spiritual desire springs from man – Ephesians 1:3 – 6; 2: 1 - 3
  - 3. Parents serve as mediators of Saving Grace – I Timothy 2:5
  - 4. The Church dispenses Sacraments which serve as mediators of Saving Grace – Ephesians 2: 8 & 9
- C. It is unfortunate that this is one of two reasons that people will often leave a church.
  - 1. The first reason is the Marriage Ceremony. If after the interview process the pastor does not feel that both of the engaged couples are truly Christians, expresses this and as a result, declines to perform the ceremony, it is not uncommon for the couple to respond by leaving the church.
  - 2. In the same vein, if after the interview process the pastor does not feel the child can truly articulate his or her salvation to the pastor's satisfaction and declines to present the child for Baptism at that time, it is not uncommon for the parents to respond by leaving the church.
  - 3. In both cases there is the attitude, "Well you are not the only show in town, I will just take my business elsewhere."
  - 4. In the case of Baptism this arises from three sources...
    - a. First is the feeling that no one can really know a child the way a parent does. I the parent am the best judge of my child's preparedness for Baptism!! Who are you to question whether my child can be admitted to your school, your church or your program?
    - b. Second is the feeling that the parent is being judged as a failure. If my child is not to be baptized then I have either failed to save them, or worse, I can't even tell if my child is saved or not.
    - c. Lastly is the feeling that the church has an obligation to perform the ordinances at the demand of the parent. Be it Baptism, the Lord's Supper, Worship Attendance, Sunday School Attendance or Youth Camp, a church should respond in compassion to the requests of the parent. In this view, it is morally wrong for the church to withhold that which is in its power to perform if the parent requests it in a reasonable way as provided for the other members.
- D. As a result there is a special emotional sense of urgency in most parents to have their children baptized at the earliest possible time.
  - 1. A child needs to be able to do more than be presented to the pastor to evidence a witness.
  - 2. While some denominations feel this public witness can be mediated
    - a. by a priest,
    - b. by a covenant relationship with the parents
    - c. or by the pastor immersing the child publicly before the church,

- d. we hold to the strict Biblical view of believers baptism being a testimony by the believer, before the church.
- 3. Still others feel that baptism is a good way to break the believer into being a “public” Christian.
  - a. As a result, reluctant candidates are encouraged to be baptized to nail down their salvation
  - b. And to increase their visibility.
  - c. We however hold to baptism as a public testimony by the believer, not a step towards a public testimony by the believer.
  - d. Thus the term, Believers Baptism

E. It is important for parents to reflect...

- 1. The parents should ask themselves, would they rather their child be baptized, though not ready, or would they rather their child wait? Prayerful and honest soul searching in this are is very healthy for parents of young children.
- 2. Parents should reflect as well on the impressionable nature of younger children.
  - a. Think for a minute concerning your pre-school child, or your child during the early pre-school years.
    - 1.) Was your child willing to believe in Santa Clause?
    - 2.) Was your child willing to believe in the Easter Bunny?
    - 3.) Was your child willing to believe in the Tooth Fairy?
    - 4.) If you sat down with your pre-schooler and told them, in all seriousness, that cheese came from the moon and showed them some cheese you said came from the moon, your preschooler would believe you.
  - b. This is not necessarily bad. Children should trust and obey their parents. It was for this very reason that we raised our children knowing that there was no Santa Clause, no Tooth Fairy, no Easter Bunny, no cheese on the moon. They were fun pretend games to play, but they always knew they were pretend.
  - c. The point is, that the belief system of children in Santa Clause, in the Easter Bunny, in the Tooth Fairy, is based on faith and trust in their parents, not truly in their own convictions and understanding.
  - d. It is for this reason that we waited till our children held convictions apart from us before we allowed them to be baptized.
    - 1.) All parents know the shock of being contradicted by your child, through another authority. The first time your child says, “But Mrs. Jones says...” and then quotes their teacher at school or church, we as parents are taken back. We are no longer the absolute authority. These early assaults are easily repulsed, but as the child matures, we begin seeing that our response is weighed against that of others and then a decision is come to by the child.
    - 2.) All parents know the surprise when their child says, “Your not going out like that?” or “Please don’t do that again around my friends”. Suddenly the child has an identity apart from their parents. The child begins to think of themselves separately from their parents lives and lifestyle.
    - 3.) A small child will, on the way to the mall, walk right through a puddle in the parking lot, even stamp their feet in it. This same middle schooler or

teenager will be hesitant to even walk in the rain, not to mention be found jumping in a mud puddle. The child has developed a sense of social being apart from the parent and is away of their social surroundings.

- 4.) Some parents find this threatening, we rejoiced in this. We rejoiced in the development of personal convictions by our children and their expression. Better to know what your child truly believes than to hold on to a fantasy.
- 5.) Acts 17:11 “Now these were more noble-minded than those in Thessalonica, for they received the word with great eagerness, examining the Scriptures daily, to see whether these things were so.”
- 6.) We felt strongly, that for our children to truly be baptized in obedience to God’s Word and as a witness to the church, that they had to have grown to the point where their convictions were being evidenced apart from our own and their social awareness, as well, was evidenced apart from our own.
- 7.) Mark 1:20 “And immediately He called them; and they left their father Zebedee in the boat with the hired servants, and went away to follow Him.”

3. Many Protestants snicker and disdain the Baptism of infants by the Catholic Church.
  - a. How many of those same protestants hold that little pink Bible and rose their child was given at the baby dedication as the assurance of their salvation.
  - b. Or hold that baptismal certificate or memory of that small child being walked down the aisle by mom as the assurance of that child’s salvation.
  - c. How much better, than to hold to such rituals, to wait and know with certainty that a mature child, made a very difficult decision, on their own, after much struggle, to openly before their peers, follow the Lord in believers baptism.
  - d. I have know doubt that some small children, spiritually mature and aware, make this decision, but my experience tells me that many do not, rather their parents, with a misplaced zeal and concern, hurry their children into a ritual that means little or nothing to the child apart from the parent.

F. A parents own religious or denominational background may come into play when pressing the child for an early baptism.

1. Paganism - Many pagan religions hold to ritual washings. Hindus, Moslems, Jews, Mormons, Jehovah’s Witnesses and others ritually wash, or baptize their members. If you came from one of these pagan groups you may feel a very real emotional need to perform this ritual on your child. This should be suppressed. There is a very important difference between Baptism and Ritual washings.
2. The Roman Catholic Church and Baptism – The Roman Catholic Church holds that Baptism is a Sacrament, not ordinance. They hold that infants are Baptized into the church. That this is done by a priest under the authority of the Pope, the Apostle of Rome, who has passed down to him by succession, from Peter, the keys to the church. Thus Baptism is the inclusionary rite which brings the child into the Church. If this your background, then you will feel a real sense of urgency, both from erroneous

teachings and from members of your extended family. This again must be given over to the authority of the Word of God.

3. Anglican and Lutheran Churches hold this same view only with a different appeal to authority. Rejecting the totality of the priestly and papal role of the Catholic church, they never-the-less count baptized infants as part of the Church and as saved members of the Church. Again, as with those from a Roman Catholic background, there will be strong traditions of christening gowns, baptismal ceremonies, god parents and the parties that follow. The pressure from family to not reject their religious rituals which mean so much to them can be very great. Christening gowns which have been passed down from generations must be laid aside, denying the extended family the chance to reaffirm their own hold vicariously through the child.
4. Church of Christ and Baptism – The Church of Christ holds that Baptism is the first act of faith, proving the validity of faith. This is called Baptismal Regeneration. The person is regenerated when Baptized into the Church of Christ and until this time there is no assurance of Salvation. In the same way, Salvation can be lost, thus re-Baptism is necessary. This again brings into play the extended family, as they obsess about the fate of their grandchild or niece.
5. Pentecostal Church and Baptism – The Pentecostal church holds water baptism as secondary to a second and higher work of Grace, that being the Baptism of the Holy Spirit. Like the Church of Christ, salvation can be lost and gained and the believer must both be re-baptized with water and with the Holy Ghost.
6. Baptist Church and Baptism – Many Baptist churches, though holding to a scriptural view of Believers Baptism, hold to the myth of Alien Immersion. By this, they withhold fellowship, membership and communion from those who have not been Baptized in the Baptist Church. They do not hold, as the Church of Christ does, that this is because they are not truly saved unless Baptized in their denomination, they simply hold that Baptism by a Baptist Church is necessary for membership in a Baptist Church.
7. Reformed Church and Baptism – Reformed Churches and Presbyterian Churches hold to Baptism as one done by believers but also as done by parents as a covenant act on behalf of their children. By faith, they have their children baptized, believing that the children of believers are in fact the elect of God. This is conciliatory towards the high church view held by the Catholic Church.
8. Para-Church and Baptism – Para-church organizations view Baptism as nice but not necessary in the hierarchy of follow-up and discipleship. It is something left for the believer to follow-up on depending upon his relationship to an individual church. No provision is made for Baptism nor do Campus Crusade, the Navigators, BSF, Intersarsity or any of the other myriad of Para church ministries throughout the US and World, make provision for the Baptism of their converts.

### III. Application

- A. Orthodox Evangelical Christianity – Holds to a universally accepted Believers Baptism by immersion, in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit in obedience to the command of Christ.

1. They recognize immersion as the Biblical view. They do not need to resort to sprinkling which has its roots in the necessity of
  - a. not immersing infants – as they are baptized into the Church
  - b. nor the elderly when performing the last rights at their death.
2. They do not require “re-baptism”, viewing Scriptural Believers Baptism as a recognized ordinance of the universal Church, not a ritual of any one denomination.
  - a. Re-baptism: Many times this term is used because a person was baptized as an infant or non-believer or was sprinkled.
  - b. This is not technically re-baptism as the Bible defines Baptism as the Immersion, in the name of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit of the Believer in obedience to Christ.
  - c. Thus non-believers and children and those sprinkled have entered into ritual washings and not Baptism.

B. Reflect: Can you hold back your child from Baptism if he is not ready?

C. Reflect: What will you say when your child wants to be “rel-baptised”, explaining to you that the first time was done to please you, rather than out of obedience to God?

D. Reflect: What is the primary issue at stake when you baptize a child too early?

1. The salvation of a child? (NO)
  - a. The salvation of children rests in the sovereign call of God
  - b. Not in man nor in the ritual of man.
2. A child thinking he is saved when he is not? (NO)
  - a. This, though a real danger does not make the child spiritually inoculated against the gospel
  - b. My guess is that 99% of all lost people think they are saved, whether “baptized” or not as a child.
  - c. This then does not set a child apart from the lost and make the child particularly unreachable.
  - d. The real issue is the disobedience of the parents and the Church. The effect on both the parents and the church is one of self deception and denial.
3. The obedience of parents and the church to the Word of God? (YES)
  - a. Parents are to love the Lord more than their children. Luke 14:26
  - b. Parents are to accept the commands of God over their love for their children. Deuteronomy 5:31; 6:7; 11:19
  - c. Parents are to place the wisdom of God over their own parental intuition. Proverbs 3:5 & 6
  - d. Parents are to submit to the Word of God, in all things, including the raising of their children. II Timothy 3:16 & 17