

BAPTISM III

Review:

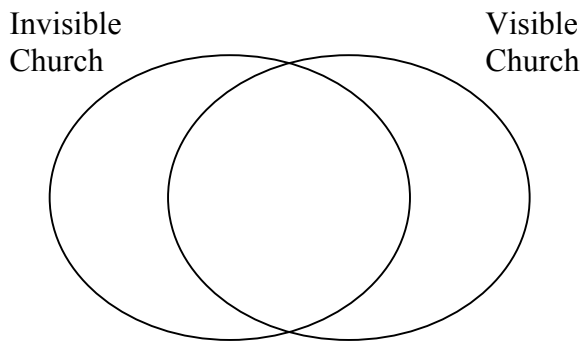
(a) A sacrament is a visible sign of an invisible grace.

(b) Circumcision is a sign of salvation.

Romans 4:11

Abraham received the sign of circumcision as a seal of the righteousness that he had by faith while he was still uncircumcised.

(c) Circumcision is a sign of belonging to the people of God. It is an initiatory rite. But not all those circumcised were saved. It is a sign of the visible not the invisible church.



Romans 9:13

Jacob I loved, but Esau I hated.

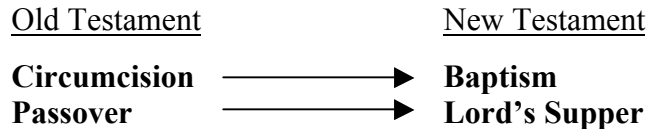
(d) Circumcision was applied to infants.

Genesis 17:9-14

⁹ And God said to Abraham, “As for you, you shall keep my covenant, you and your offspring after you throughout their generations. ¹⁰ This is my covenant, which you shall keep, between me and you and your offspring after you: Every male among you shall be circumcised. ¹¹ You shall be circumcised in the flesh of your foreskins, and it shall be a sign of the covenant between me and you. ¹² He who is eight days old among you shall be circumcised. Every male throughout your generations, whether born in your house or bought with your money from any foreigner who is not of your offspring, ¹³ both he who is born in your house and he who is bought with your money, shall surely be circumcised. So shall my covenant be in your flesh an everlasting covenant. ¹⁴ Any uncircumcised male who is not circumcised in the flesh of his foreskin shall be cut off from his people; he has broken my covenant.”

(e) Infants were circumcised because they are represented by their believing parents.

(1) New Testament baptism corresponds to Old Testament circumcision.



Colossians 2:11-12

¹¹ In him also you were circumcised with a circumcision made without hands, by putting off the body of the flesh, by the circumcision of Christ, ¹² having been buried with him in baptism, in which you were also raised with him through faith in the powerful working of God, who raised him from the dead.

The symbolism is essentially the same. *Circumcision* – cutting off sin. *Baptism* – washing away sin.

Acts 22:16

Rise and be baptized and wash away your sins, calling on his name.

Both circumcision and baptism are initiatory rites.

1 Corinthians 12:13

For in one Spirit we were all baptized into one body.

Ephesians 4:4-6

⁴ There is one body and one Spirit- just as you were called to the one hope that belongs to your call – ⁵ one Lord, one faith, one baptism, ⁶ one God and Father of all, who is over all and through all and in all.

Matthew 28:19

Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit.

Side note: baptism is not optional. All Christians are expected to be baptized.

**(2) What about infant baptism? Do we see that in the New Testament?
(In other words, are the children of believers members of the church?)**

Acts 2:37-39

³⁷ Now when they heard this they were cut to the heart, and said to Peter and the rest of the apostles, “Brothers, what shall we do?” ³⁸ And Peter said to them, “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 For the promise is for you and for your children and for all who are far off, everyone whom the Lord our God calls to himself.”

Luke 18:15-16

¹⁵ Now they were bringing even infants to him that he might touch them. And when the disciples saw it, they rebuked them. ¹⁶ But Jesus called them to him, saying, “Let the children come to me, and do not hinder them, for to such belongs the kingdom of God.”

Ephesians 6:1-3

¹ Children, obey your parents in the Lord, for this is right. ² Honor your father and mother (this is the first commandment with a promise), ³ that it may go well with you and that you may live long in the land.

(3) Are there specific examples of infants being baptized? (the case of *household* baptisms)

Acts 16:14-15

¹⁴ One who heard us was a woman named Lydia, from the city of Thyatira, a seller of purple goods, who was a worshiper of God. The Lord opened her heart to pay attention to what was said by Paul. ¹⁵ And after she was baptized, and her household as well, she urged us, saying, “If you have judged me to be faithful to the Lord, come to my house and stay.”

Acts 16:30-34

³⁰ Then the jailer brought Paul and Silas out and said, “Sirs, what must I do to be saved?” ³¹ And they said, “Believe in the Lord Jesus, and you will be saved, you and your household.” ³² And they spoke the word of the Lord to him and to all who were in his house. ³³ And he took them the same hour of the night and washed their wounds; and he was baptized at once, he and all his family. ³⁴ Then he brought them up into his house and set food before them. And the jailer rejoiced along with his entire household that he had believed in God.

And the households of Crispus (**Acts 18:8**), Cornelius (**Acts 10:2, 47-48**), and Stephanas (**1 Cor. 1:16**).

(4) Does the word “household” include children?

Genesis 30:29-30

²⁹ Jacob said to Laban, “You yourself know how I have served you, and how your livestock has fared with me. ³⁰ For you had little before I came, and it has increased abundantly, and the LORD has blessed you wherever I turned. But now when shall I provide for my own household also?”

Joshua 2:17-19

¹⁷ The men said to Rahab, “We will be guiltless with respect to this oath of yours that you have made us swear. ¹⁸ Behold, when we come into the land, you shall tie this scarlet cord in the window through which you let us down, and you shall gather into your house your father and mother, your brothers, and all your father’s household. ¹⁹ Then if anyone goes out of the doors of your house into the street, his blood shall be on his own head, and we shall be guiltless. But if a hand is laid on anyone who is with you in the house, his blood shall be on our head.”

1 Timothy 3:4-5

⁴ He must manage his own household well, with all dignity keeping his children submissive, ⁵ for if someone does not know how to manage his own household, how will he care for God's church?

(a) A sacrament is a visible sign of an invisible grace.

We cannot see invisible grace. But God gives us a sign through which we can understand the grace within.

(b) Circumcision is a sign of salvation.

It was an outward sign of the righteousness that is received by faith.

The symbolism: *foreskin* = sin, unrighteousness

cutting off foreskin = cutting off sin (righteousness)

(c) Circumcision is a sign of belonging to the people of God. It is an initiatory rite.

But not all those circumcised were saved. It is a sign of the visible not the invisible church.

It naturally follows that circumcision is a sign of covenant membership. It marked all those who belonged to God. Those who were uncircumcised belonged in the pagan world.

It was an initiatory rite. It was how you entered the community of salvation.

However, we must remember that not all those who were circumcised were saved. And not all who were saved were circumcised. We must keep in mind the invisible church / visible church distinction.

Jacob and Esau were both circumcised, but Esau was in the visible church, but not in the invisible church.

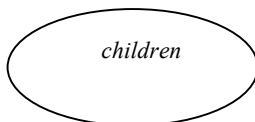
(d) Circumcision was applied to infants.

In the Abrahamic Covenant, God makes promises to Abraham and to Abraham's offspring.

Children were included in the people of God. They were not out there in the pagan world, but inside the covenant community. They were not unholy, but clean.

Pagan World

People of God



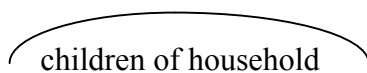
(e) Infants were circumcised because they are represented by their believing parents.

God deals with humanity not as individuals but as families, as households.

As modern people, we are uncomfortable with this. We live in an individualistic culture.

But the culture of the Bible is a communal culture.

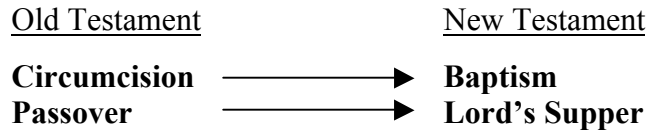
head of household



Some might say, “why not wait until children grow up and express faith before circumcising them?”

But that is a desire to collapse the visible/invisible church distinction. We want to only apply the sign of salvation to those in the invisible church. But the sign is for the visible church, which includes both sheep and goats.

(1) New Testament baptism corresponds to Old Testament circumcision.



There are two sets of sacraments in the Old and New Testaments. Each of the OT sacraments are replaced in the NT. The OT sacraments are bloody anticipating Christ's sacrifice. The NT sacraments are non-bloody because Christ fulfilled the shedding of blood.

In Colossians 2:11-12, Paul links baptism and circumcision. Both point to an invisible grace, what Paul calls "the circumcision of Christ" and "a circumcision made without hands." Both baptism and circumcision are signs of the righteousness we have in Christ.

The symbolism is essentially the same. Circumcision – cutting off sin. Baptism – washing away sin.

They are both pictures of what Christ does for us. Our sins are removed and we are made clean. Circumcision – foreskin represents sin. Baptism – dirt represents sin.

One thing people don't realize is that baptism is a kind of ritual washing (more on this later). It's a picture of becoming clean.

Both circumcision and baptism are initiatory rites.

Baptism is how you enter the church. In every instance in the New Testament, you entered the church through the rite of baptism. Baptism was a mark of belonging to the people of God.

We see this in 1 Corinthians 12 and Ephesians 4. In Eph. 4 we see that baptism and faith and being in the body are all the same thing. Being a Christian, being baptized, belonging to a church are all the same thing. There is simply no such thing as an unbaptized Christian – or rather, it is not the norm. Matt. 28 also shows us that baptism is really not optional.

This is why baptism and church membership are linked. You cannot be a member of the church without being baptized. People might disagree because we've essentially unlinked baptism from the church. Baptism has become an unrelated thing you do as a Christian. But you never see a case of a Christian in the New Testament who has not been baptized. After any conversion, you immediately see baptism.

Side note: baptism is not optional. All Christians are expected to be baptized.

**(2) What about infant baptism? Do we see that in the New Testament?
(In other words, are the children of believers members of the church?)**

Here is where there is controversy. Presbyterians and Baptists disagree. You don't have to agree with me here. You can disagree and still belong to the church. This is one of those important but peripheral issues.

Presbyterian – infant baptism (paedobaptism)

Baptist – believer's baptism (credobaptism)

What is the **“promise”** Peter speaks of? It’s the Abrahamic covenant promise of salvation. Remember who was circumcised in the Abrahamic Covenant? Three sets of people. (1) Abraham, (2) his children, (3) the foreign slaves in his household.

We see that exact same formula repeated by Peter. The promise is for “you, for your children, and for those far off” (Gentiles). Meaning, the New Covenant works exactly the same way as the Old Covenant in terms of membership – it includes believers and their children. Children are not excluded.

The argument Baptists make is the in the New Testament, you don’t see an explicit command to baptize infants. That’s true. But actually, what’s more striking is that you don’t see an explicit command to not baptize infants.

If the New Covenant excluded children, Jewish believers would have been astonished and alarmed. It certainly would have raised questions and controversy – like the fact that circumcision was no longer required of Gentile believers. So why isn’t there any record of any controversy or any question about why baptism (the rite of covenant membership) is now excludes children?

The fact that there is no explicit verse shows us that the Jewish believers naturally assumed baptism worked the same way circumcision worked – in other words, children of believers were indeed baptized.

Luke 18:15-16 – Jesus includes infants in the Kingdom of God. He doesn’t qualify and say, “but only when they believe.” They belong in the Kingdom now and when they grow up, they receive that reality through faith.

According to Mark 10:16, Jesus blesses the infants. How can he bless them without their expressing faith?

Ephesians 6:1-3 – Ephesians is Paul’s letter to the Ephesian church. In Ephesians 5-6, he talks to different groups within the church. He addresses husbands, wives, slaves, masters, and children! All these are in the church. In other words, Paul tells us the children of believers are in the church, not out in the pagan world.

Pagan World

People of God

not here

children

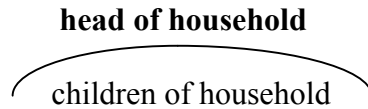


Finally, whatever objections people have against infant baptism, they must also have against infant circumcision. People might say, “it’s not proper to apply baptism to infants who do not have faith.” But how do we explain the fact that infants without faith were circumcised?

(3) Are there specific examples of infants being baptized? (the case of *household baptisms*)

There are five household baptisms in the NT. We'll focus on two.

Acts 16:14-15 – Lydia believes and she and her entire household are baptized. This fits the paradigm we've looked at before – the faith of the head of the household represents the children of the household. In this case, Lydia was the head of the household. And when she believes, her act of faith represents her household – they join the church along with her. (Again, remember the Bible presupposes a communal culture, not an individualistic culture.)



Acts 16:30-34 – Again, we see the exact same thing. The Philippian jailer believes and his entire household is baptized. What's really interesting is verse 34, at the end. The text specifically singles out the jailer alone who believed – not his household. And yet his act of belief represents his family and so they are baptized.

Now Baptists will argue that the word “household” doesn't include children. It only includes adults.

Then, Baptists will argue that even if household does include children, the jailer's household didn't include children. Nowhere does it say specifically children were baptized. Maybe that might be true. Maybe the jailer's family didn't have any children in it. Possible. But then Lydia's as well? And Crispus and Stephanus and Cornelius?

(4) Does the word “household” include children?

The normal way the Bible uses the word “household” and all its synonyms is to that it includes children. This idea that a household doesn't include children is really a modern notion. Remember, in the Bible, God deals with humanity, not as individuals, but as families (households).

Let's look at some examples.

Gen. 30 – when Jacob talks about his household, is he only talking about Rachel and Leah, or is he not talking about all his children?

Joshua 2 – again we see this pattern of one person believing and his/her entire household being saved. In this case, it is Rahab. When the spies tell her to gather with her father's household, are they saying, “but only the adults. No children will be spared.”?

1 Tim. 3 – A New Testament example. One of the qualifications of an elder is that he has to be able to manage his household well, for he will be managing the church community so he needs to demonstrate management abilities with his own family. Now, is Paul excluding young children in the requirement? So that the elder only has to manage the adults in his family? Of course not.

The normal conventional way the Bible talks about households is to include children. So what's remarkable about these household baptisms is that they don't explicitly exclude children! If baptism operated radically differently than circumcision (that is, it excluded children of believers), then we would expect the text to alert our attention to this. Instead, the text speaks of household baptisms just like there were household circumcisions as if everything is the same. The reason is because it is.