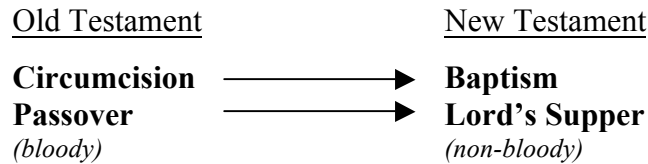


BAPTISM VI

~ a comprehensive review ~

(1) There are two sets of sacraments in the Old Testament and the New Testament.



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.

Mark 14:22-25

²² And as they were eating, Jesus took bread, and after blessing it broke it and gave it to them, and said, "Take; this is my body." ²³ And he took a cup, and when he had given thanks he gave it to them, and they all drank of it. ²⁴ And he said to them, "This is my blood of the covenant, which is poured out for many. ²⁵ Truly, I say to you, I will not drink again of the fruit of the vine until that day when I drink it new in the kingdom of God."

(2) There is essential continuity between circumcision and baptism.

Acts 2:38-39

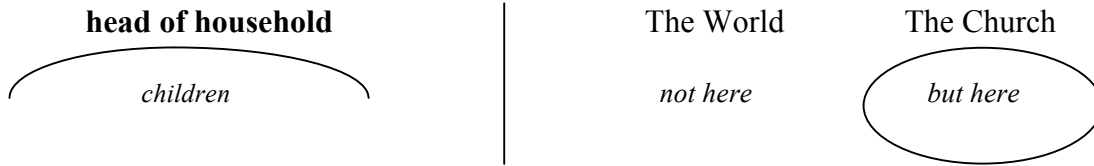
³⁸ And Peter said to them, "Repent and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins, and you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit. ³⁹ For the promise is for you and for your children and for all who are far off, everyone whom the Lord our God calls to himself."

(3) Circumcision was applied to the children of believers.

Genesis 17:9-12

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.

(4) The children received the sign of the covenant because their parents act as their representative.



(5) The assumption would have been that baptism works the same way circumcision did. The fact that there is no explicit prohibition against infant baptism is equivalent to a direct command to baptize infants.

(6) In the 'household' baptisms, we have examples of infant baptism.

The households of **Cornelius** (Acts 10:2, 47-48), **Lydia** (Acts 16:14-15), **the Philippian jailer** (Acts 16:30-34), **Crispus** (Acts 18:8), and **Stephanas** (1 Cor. 1:16).

(7) The early church universally practiced infant baptism.

Augustine (AD 354 – 430)

The custom of Mother Church in baptizing infants is certainly not to be scorned, nor is it to be regarded in any way as superfluous, nor is it to be believed that its tradition is anything except apostolic.

– *The Literal Interpretation of Genesis*

(8) Baptism is a sign and seal of grace.

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.

- (9) Baptism is an initiatory rite of the church. Baptism and church membership are one and the same. Baptism is only properly administered by the local church.**

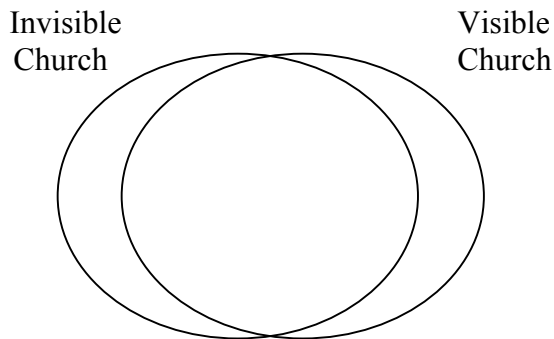
Genesis 17:14

Any uncircumcised male who is not circumcised in the flesh of his foreskin shall be cut off from his people.

1 Corinthians 12:13

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

- (10) Not everyone who is baptized is saved. Not everyone who is saved is baptized.**



Romans 9:13

Jacob I loved, but Esau I hated.

Matthew 13:24-26

²⁴ Jesus put another parable before them, saying, "The kingdom of heaven may be compared to a man who sowed good seed in his field, ²⁵ but while his men were sleeping, his enemy came and sowed weeds among the wheat and went away. ²⁶ So when the plants came up and bore grain, then the weeds appeared also."

Luke 23:42-43

⁴² And the thief said, "Jesus, remember me when you come into your kingdom."

⁴³ And Jesus said to him, "Truly, I say to you, today you will be with me in Paradise."

- (11) Why should we baptize infants if there is a possibility that they will leave the church?**

- (12) You only need to be baptized once. Even if you leave the church and come back, you do not need to be re-baptized.**

(13) Only those who are baptized may partake of the Lord's Supper – it is only for Christians.

Exodus 12:43-48

⁴³ And the LORD said to Moses and Aaron, “This is the statute of the Passover: no foreigner shall eat of it, ⁴⁴ but every slave that is bought for money may eat of it after you have circumcised him. ⁴⁵ No foreigner or hired servant may eat of it. ⁴⁶ It shall be eaten in one house; you shall not take any of the flesh outside the house, and you shall not break any of its bones. ⁴⁷ All the congregation of Israel shall keep it. ⁴⁸ If a stranger shall sojourn with you and would keep the Passover to the LORD, let all his males be circumcised. Then he may come near and keep it; he shall be as a native of the land. But no uncircumcised person shall eat of it.”

1 Corinthians 11:18, 20, 23-26

¹⁸ For, in the first place, when you come together as a church, I hear that there are divisions among you.

²⁰ When you come together, it is not the Lord's supper that you eat.

²³ For I received from the Lord what I also delivered to you, that the Lord Jesus on the night when he was betrayed took bread, ²⁴ and when he had given thanks, he broke it, and said, “This is my body which is for you. Do this in remembrance of me.” ²⁵ In the same way also he took the cup, after supper, saying, “This cup is the new covenant in my blood. Do this, as often as you drink it, in remembrance of me.” ²⁶ For as often as you eat this bread and drink the cup, you proclaim the Lord's death until he comes.

(14) Baptism is a ceremonial washing. Therefore, the amount of water is not significant.

Ezekiel 36:25

I will sprinkle clean water on you, and you shall be clean from all your uncleannesses.

Notes:

(1) There are two sets of sacraments in the Old Testament and the New Testament.

We start with the assumption of *continuity* between the OT and NT. In other words, each set of sacraments works exactly the same in either the Old or New Covenants. This paradigm very helpful because the New Testament says relatively little about baptism compared to what it says about circumcision. We understand baptism in light of the plentiful instructions we have about circumcision.

You can also see from the graphic, that there is a symmetry between the sacraments in the OT and NT. God relates to his people in basically the same fashion whether in the Old Covenant or the New Covenant. The difference is promise (OT) → fulfillment (NT) // shadow (OT) → reality (NT).

The connection between Passover and the Lord's Supper is commonly understood. After all, Jesus made the link quite explicit. But the link between circumcision and baptism is not as explicit. The one verse we do have is from **Colossians 2:11-12**. There we see that Paul directly links the two. But the connection is not based on a single verse. It's based on the assumption of continuity.

(2) There is essential continuity between circumcision and baptism.

The other key verse is Acts 2. Peter says – “be baptized; for the promise is for you and your children.” He's drawing on the language of the Abrahamic Covenant – meaning the church and baptism works exactly the same way as Israel and circumcision did.

(3) Circumcision was applied to the children of believers.

Therefore, when we see that circumcision was applied to the children of believers, we understand that for baptism, the same principle applies.

(4) The children received the sign of the covenant because their parents act as their representative.

Our immediate response is that children, particularly infants, do not have faith. True enough. But baptism and circumcision are not signs of *faith*. It is a sign God's grace. That is a very important distinction.

We need to realize that God deals with humanity not as individuals, but as families. So that when the head of the household accepts the gospel, his decision counts for his entire family. The children in the household are included on the basis of representation.

The fundamental issue here is where do the children of believers belong? Should we consider them as little pagan unbelievers? Or are they in the church? They are in the church. We raise them up as Christians. They don't need to “convert,” but take hold of what is already theirs. We teach them as young children – God loves you and sent his Son to die for your sins. Only if they willfully reject the gospel are they in “the world,” and thus repudiating the meaning of their baptism.

(5) The assumption would have been that baptism works the same way circumcision did.

The fact that there is no explicit prohibition against infant baptism is equivalent to a direct command to baptize infants.

If baptism worked fundamentally differently than circumcision, we would expect there to be a big controversy. Remember that the early church struggled with how much of the OT was still valid and how much was ceremonial and fulfilled in Christ (no longer needing to be practiced by the church).

One of the most fundamental concepts in the OT is that children were included in Israel. They were circumcised. If in the NT, children did not belong in the church, this would have undoubtedly troubled people and questions would have arisen. Paul and other NT writers would have spent a great deal of energy explaining that infants are not to be baptized. But we see no evidence of this. Therefore, **the assumption of continuity must not have been contradicted** – in other words, children of believers were to be baptized same as children in the OT.

(6) In the ‘household’ baptisms, we have examples of infant baptism.

Therefore, we should not be surprised at the many household baptisms we see in the NT. It follows the same pattern we’ve observed in the OT.

Some might respond – “ah, but there’s no *explicit* mention of infants.” Yes, but that would be an unnecessary redundancy to say, “Lydia’s household and the infants.” The word ‘household’ includes children. This is just the normal way the ancient world thought and more importantly, this is the way the Bible uses the word household in both the Old and New Testaments.

(7) The early church universally practiced infant baptism.

The last word is important. Augustine, along with many other church fathers, testify that the early church’s practice of infant baptism comes directly from the apostles’ teaching. In other words, it’s not something that the early church just assumed or started anew – but it came from the apostles.

Now, if infant baptism was not taught by the apostles, then the early church universally switched and instituted infant baptism by the 2nd century (when we have the earliest records). This frankly stretches historical credibility.

(8) Baptism is a sign and seal of grace.

Baptism is a visible sign of the invisible grace of the righteousness we have in Christ. The sign shows us something about salvation. And it testifies to the world. Baptism is also a seal. A seal is a pledge, a promise by God to the one baptized. So that baptism is not merely a sign, but it is a *means of grace*. Through baptism, we experience the love of God, we gain assurance, we are strengthened in our faith.

(9) Baptism is an initiatory rite of the church. Baptism and church membership are one and the same. Baptism is only properly administered by the local church.

Baptism is an initiatory rite – it’s the ceremony of entering the church. It’s how you become a member of the local church – unless you’ve been baptized before, then you’re “transferring” your membership. The two verses cited are really just a small bit of the Scriptural evidence. If not convincing, please refer to earlier lessons where we unpacked this much more extensively.

Baptism is the visible sign of belonging to the visible church. This is why baptism is only properly administered by the church. When a parachurch organization does it, into what are they baptizing the person? You see how this disconnects baptism from church membership and distorts the meaning of baptism.

(10) Not everyone who is baptized is saved. Not everyone who is saved is baptized.

Not everyone who is baptized is saved. Esau received the covenant sign but was not saved. Baptism does not exclude the necessity of faith. If you reject the gospel, then you render your baptism meaningless – just as Esau did by despising the Abrahamic promise.

This leads us to the very important concept of the Invisible/Visible Church. The two are not co-extensive. They overlap a great deal. But they are distinct, not identical.

When Jesus spoke of wheat and weeds, what was he talking about? He was talking about the church. There are some who seem to believe – they are baptized, they sit in the pews, they sing the songs – but they don't believe. They are the weeds. This is the right side of the graphic.

But there are also those who are saved but not in the visible church. The example of this is the thief on the cross. This should only be in extreme cases. In other words, if you are a Christian and believe the gospel, you should be baptized and join a local, visible church.

So, baptism means you belong to the visible church. Unfortunately, not everyone who is in the church is saved – there will always be false believers. But this reality is *invisible* to us. These are not *obvious* false believers. They fool us. And so we talk about the visible church, not the invisible church. Only God knows the invisible church. We as humans deal with what we can see – the visible church. If this sounds redundant – conceptually, this has been very difficult for people to understand. And of course it has great explanatory implications for infant baptism.

(11) Why should we baptize infants if there is a possibility that they will leave the church?

Because baptism is not a sign of the invisible church, but the visible church. There are people in the visible church who are true believers and who are false believers. The point is that we can't readily tell the difference. They both profess faith, they both sit in worship services, they both are baptized. This will always be the case until Christ returns. There are wheat and weeds in the field of God's kingdom.

Infants are baptized not because they will be saved for sure, but because by the faith of their parents, they are included in the church. They may leave the church, but that holds true for adult believers as well.

In other words, baptized infants who end up rejecting the faith is the same problem as baptized adults who end up reject the faith.

(12) You only need to be baptized once. Even if you leave the church and come back, you do not need to be re-baptized.

Baptism is a picture of Christ's saving work. He saves us once and for all – we do not need to be continually washed to be cleansed. Even if we reject our baptism and leave the church – but then come back and repent and believe, we do not need to be re-baptized. Baptism is a once for all time experience.

(13) Only those who are baptized may partake of the Lord's Supper – it is only for Christians.

If you see the Exodus 12 passage, it's clear the only circumcised Israelites may partake of Passover. Likewise, only baptized believers may partake of the Lord's Supper. Another way to say this is that only Christians may eat of Christ's body and blood. The same concept is expressed in 1 Corinthians 11 – “when you come together as a church” and partake of the Lord's supper.

Some people might have difficulty with this. Isn't it enough to simply believe? Why do you have to be baptized as well? Part of the difficulty is that people disassociate belief and baptism. That should not be. When you believe the gospel, you should be baptized. In the NT, it's one and the same thing.

The other problem is that Christians approach their faith very individualistically. Baptism is a communal sign. The church administers the sacrament. There are a lot of people who want to partake of Communion but remain a kind of lone-ranger Christian, unattached to a local church and unbaptized. But they fail to realize that Communion is a communal activity! It's not eating the bread and wine individually, but *together* in fellowship. Therefore, private faith is not a qualification, but public faith. Baptism is the expression of public faith.

(14) Baptism is a ceremonial washing. Therefore, the amount of water is not significant.

Since baptism is ceremonial, the water doesn't actually have to fully remove all the dirt. The token amount of water is sufficient to convey the meaning of cleansing. This is why in the OT, the dominant mode of ceremonial washing was sprinkling.