

# INFANT BAPTISM

## Why baptize babies when they don't have faith?

- not because babies have faith | their parents have faith

## Where do you see that in the Bible?

- logic of continuity in Bible (between Old and New Testaments)

## We see principle in OT circumcision

- circumcision was an OT sacrament – sign and seal of salvation
- circumcision was applied to infants

### Romans 4:11

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

## Objection: circumcision is an ethnic marker of Jewishness

- symbolism of circumcision was picture of salvation

### Deuteronomy 10:16

Circumcise therefore the foreskin of your heart and be no longer stubborn.

### Colossians 2:11-12

<sup>11</sup> 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, <sup>12</sup> 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.

## If circumcision is analogous to baptism, why babies circumcised?

- because faith of parents count for their children
- in Bible, we are not individuals, but members of a family

### Genesis 7:1

The LORD said to Noah, “Go into the ark, you and all your household, for I have seen that you are righteous before me in this generation.”

### Deuteronomy 5:9-10

<sup>9</sup> You shall not bow down to them or serve them; for I the LORD your God am a jealous God, visiting the iniquity of the fathers on the children to the third and fourth generation of those who hate me, <sup>10</sup> but showing steadfast love to thousands of those who love me and keep my commandments.

## Do we see infant baptism in the New Testament? – qualified yes

## Command to baptize infants at Pentecost

### Acts 2:38-39

<sup>38</sup> 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. <sup>39</sup> 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.”

## Circumstantial evidence of inclusion of children in church

### Ephesians 6:1-3

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

### Mark 10:13-16

<sup>13</sup> And they were bringing children to him that he might touch them, and the disciples rebuked them. <sup>14</sup> But when Jesus saw it, he was indignant and said to them, “Let the children come to me; do not hinder them, for to such belongs the kingdom of God. <sup>15</sup> Truly, I say to you, whoever does not receive the kingdom of God like a child shall not enter it.” <sup>16</sup> And he took them in his arms and blessed them, laying his hands on them.

## There are five household baptisms in the New Testament

### Acts 16:14-15

<sup>14</sup> 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. <sup>15</sup> 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.” And she prevailed upon us.

*See also households of **Cornelius** (Acts 10:2, 47-48), **Philippian jailer** (Acts 16:30-34), **Crispus** (Acts 18:8) and **Stephanas** (1 Cor. 1:16).*

## Finally, evidence from church history

- infant baptism universally practiced until Anabaptists (16<sup>th</sup> century)

## **Infant Baptism Notes**

### **Why baptize babies when they don't have faith?**

- it's true babies don't have faith
- we don't baptize babies because they have faith
- we baptize babies because their parents have faith
- that's basic argument

### **Where do you see that in the Bible?**

- people are usually looking for a proof-text – show me a verse
- of course, there is no verse | aha, that ends argument
- infant baptism took me a long time to understand

### **Logic behind infant baptism – goes basically to how Bible fits together**

- two basic parts – Old Testament and New Testament
- fundamental question: how much continuity and discontinuity?
- fundamental assumption behind infant baptism – basic continuity
- once accept and understand continuity, then argument makes sense

### **We see principle in OT circumcision**

#### **Romans 4:11 – “Abraham received sign of circumcision as seal of righteousness that he had by faith.”**

- shows us circumcision was an OT sacrament – sign and seal of salvation (righteousness in Christ)
- this sign of salvation was applied to children **before** they demonstrated faith
- if know story, Abraham circumcised Isaac and Ishmael / Jacob and Esau

### **Immediate objection – circumcision not parallel to baptism because circumcision ethnic marker for Jews**

#### **Problem, if look at Bible, very clear circumcision was a sign of salvation**

- think about symbolism of circumcision
- cut off foreskin of penis | foreskin = sin, circumcision = made clean
- otherwise, numerous passages make no sense at all

#### **Deuteronomy 10:16 – “circumcise therefore the foreskin of your heart and be no longer stubborn”**

- how cut off foreskin of your heart? | means, make your heart attentive to God (spiritual exercise)
- also, Romans 4:11 – circumcision sign and seal of righteousness!

## **Colossians 2:11-12**

<sup>11</sup> 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, <sup>12</sup> 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.

### **Paul reminding his readers of their salvation in Christ**

- “you were circumcised” – not talking about physical circumcision
- spiritual circumcision – “made without hands” (done by God)
- defines further – “putting off the body of the flesh” | our sins were cut away from us
- “by the circumcision of Christ” – Christ was cut off for us on cross
- v. 12 – “having been buried with him in baptism” | notice parallel between circumcision and baptism
- to be saved is to have our flesh cut off **and** to be buried with Christ
- circumcision and baptism both point to same thing | work in the same way, signs and seal of gospel

### **Which leads to question – if circumcision is basically baptism of OT, why were children circumcised?**

#### **Answer – faith of parents count for their children**

- in Bible, we are not individuals, but members of a family
- this is very difficult to understand because we live in an individualistic culture
- biblical culture is communal – your fate lies with your family and decisions of your parents

**Genesis 7:1 – The LORD said to Noah, “Go into the ark, you and all your household, for I have seen that you are righteous before me in this generation.”**

#### **Noah is righteous**

- and so God saves Noah and his family
- but wait a minute, only Noah was righteous | told nothing about sons, in fact, Ham isn’t righteous
- so why should his entire family be saved? Because Noah was representative head
- his faith and righteousness covered his family

## **Deuteronomy 5:9-10**

<sup>9</sup> You shall not bow down to them or serve them; for I the LORD your God am a jealous God, visiting the iniquity of the fathers on the children to the third and fourth generation of those who hate me, <sup>10</sup> but showing steadfast love to thousands of those who love me and keep my commandments.

### **Modern people are really discomforted by this passage**

- why should the sins of the father affect his children (and his children’s children)?
- again, in individualistic culture, each person is independent of family and independent moral agent
- but in Bible, you are not isolated from your family | what happens to you, happens to your children
- frankly, this is the more realistic model of human condition

## **Does this mean simply because I'm a Christian, my children are automatically saved?**

- as taught in Sacraments class – no
- the sign is useless unless united with faith | children must accept gospel on their own

## **So why apply sign at all? Shouldn't you wait until make sure?**

- when are you sure? at what point does a child truly believe?
  - infant baptism says – child will grow up being taught gospel from earliest memory
  - ideally, never be a stark conversion, but child will grow up into their faith – believing more and more
  - in that paradigm, baptism does two things: (1) tells child they are in church and (2) God loves them
  - remember baptism is a seal – to child and to his parents
  - in other words, we treat the child like a Christian in every way as they grow up
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## **Do we see infant baptism in the New Testament?**

### **Before answer question – remember the issue of continuity versus discontinuity**

- if assume continuity, then burden of proof is on no-infant-baptism, meaning, there must be an explicit verse where infant are forbidden baptism
- if assume discontinuity, then burden of proof is on yes-infant-baptism, meaning, there must be an explicit verse where infants are commanded baptism
- in reality, there's no explicit verse either way, so it depends largely on your assumption

### **Acts 2:38-39**

<sup>38</sup> 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. <sup>39</sup> 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.”

### **At Pentecost, crowd asks Peter how they can be saved**

- repent and be baptized – salvation sign of the New Covenant, which replaced circumcision
- Peter connects baptism and children | response – children who will believe later, if and when believe
- notice how Peter expresses it – promise is for you, your children, and those far off (Gentiles)

### **What promise is Peter talking about? – Abrahamic Covenant**

- when go to Abrahamic Covenant, God gives salvation sign – circumcision
- applied to three groups: you, your children, and foreigner in your midst

### **Genesis 17:10-13**

<sup>10</sup> This is my covenant, which you shall keep, between me and you and your offspring after you: Every male among you shall be circumcised. <sup>11</sup> You shall be circumcised in the flesh of your foreskins, and it shall be a sign of the covenant between me and you. <sup>12</sup> 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, <sup>13</sup> 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.

## **New Covenant works same way as the Old Covenant – children are included**

- if children were not included, this would have been very alarming and controversial to Jews
- if baptism is not to be applied to children, where is the controversy?
- there is a vigorous controversy surrounding circumcision, but nothing about children
- argument from silence | this argument only makes sense when you understand continuity in Bible

## **Circumstantial evidence of inclusion of children in church**

- remember, baptism is a sign of inclusion in the church
- so if children are inside the church, then baptism is properly applied to them

## **Ephesians 6:1-3**

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

## **Paul gives instructions to children on the Christian life**

- these are children of believers inside the church
- Paul at beginning of letter – to saints who are in Ephesus
- dovetails with how parents are to instruct their children – as little Christians

## **Mark 10:13-16**

<sup>13</sup> And they were bringing children to him that he might touch them, and the disciples rebuked them. <sup>14</sup> But when Jesus saw it, he was indignant and said to them, “Let the children come to me; do not hinder them, for to such belongs the kingdom of God. <sup>15</sup> Truly, I say to you, whoever does not receive the kingdom of God like a child shall not enter it.” <sup>16</sup> And he took them in his arms and blessed them, laying his hands on them.

## **Jesus specifically welcomes and includes children in the Kingdom of God**

- he doesn't say, “well, they don't believe yet, so they're on the outside”
- he takes them in his arms and blesses them
- the church cannot be stingier than Jesus on who is inside the Kingdom

## **5 household baptisms in NT**

**Acts 16:14-15** – <sup>14</sup> 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. <sup>15</sup> 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.” And she prevailed upon us.

## **Lydia believes the gospel – her entire household is baptized**

- seems very strange to us because we're individualists
- Lydia was head of household, represents children in household
- people respond, well it doesn't specifically say “children”
- word “household” (**oikoj**) – family, entire household
- unreasonable to expect Bible to say, “Baby Publius was also baptized”

### **Maybe Lydia's household didn't include children**

- but all five household didn't include children?
- this stretches believability

Households of **Cornelius** (Acts 10:2, 47-48), **Philippian jailer** (Acts 16:30-34), **Crispus** (Acts 18:8) and **Stephanas** (1 Cor. 1:16).

### **Finally, evidence from church history**

- infant baptism universally practiced in church by all major sects of Christianity
- until Anabaptists (16<sup>th</sup> century) – so called because “re-baptizers”
- modern day Baptists draw lineage from Anabaptists

### **For me, this is a very compelling argument**

- if the New Testament practice was to exclude infants from baptism, how and when did it switch over?
- church practice does not change easily
- and where is the controversy? where is documentation that alternative practice in church?

### **Origen (AD 185 – 251)**

The church received from the apostles the tradition of giving baptism to infants.

– *Commentary on Romans*

### **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*