

BAPTISM IS FOR ADULTS

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Mark 16:16 says, “He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved, but he that believeth not shall be damned.” So, seeing how important baptism is, the tradition of the Catholic church and many other churches has been to baptize infants. The basic reasoning is that if you are baptized as an infant, you will be saved if you die at any time later during your growing up. And to correct the obvious problem with infant baptism which is that infants have no knowledge of what is happening to them, the church invented the tradition of ‘confirmation’ which a child undergoes later on when he is grown enough to be aware of and ‘confirmed’ in his faith.

There is no such thing in the Bible as the concept of infant baptism and confirmation later. There are no scriptures in the Bible showing the baptism of children. The only one that can be found as possible justification for this practice is 1Cor 1:16 which says the ‘whole household’ of Stephanus was baptized. This scripture is interpreted to mean that even the children of that household must have been baptized. But it doesn’t say that. Another justification is to quote Jesus who said, “Suffer the little children to come to me and forbid them not.” (Mat 19:14) But was Jesus here sanctioning the baptizing of children or was he simply encouraging people to teach them about him? Also quoted are writings of the early church fathers who did infant baptizing. But just because those who were called ‘church fathers’ did it, that does not prove it is God’s will. So what is God’s will in this matter? And how can we KNOW?

The only way to KNOW God’s will on the subject of infant baptism is to really understand the meaning of baptism. This is done by putting together all the scriptures about baptism and meditating on them. When you really understand the meaning, it becomes clear that baptism of children is never mentioned in the Bible because God never intended it for children. In one scripture the baptizing of men and women is mentioned, but baptizing children is not mentioned here. (Acts 8:12) As we will see, the practice of baptizing children actually shows that most churches have lost the true and very deep meaning of baptism because they have wasted this vital precious doctrine exercising it on infants who are totally incapable of comprehending it.

Baptism is not just a ceremony of initiation into a church. The chapter of Rom 6 explains what baptism means - that you are being baptized into the death of Jesus Christ. Baptism is a word used in the context of being put to death. Jesus used this word when James and John asked for high positions in his kingdom. He said, “Are you able to be baptized with the baptism that I will be baptized with?” (Mat 20:20-23) In other words he was asking them, “are you willing to die as I am going to die?” Rom 6 explains that when you are baptized into the death of Christ, you are participating in his death on the cross. And when you are immersed into the water and come up out of the watery grave, it is symbolic of his death and burial and then resurrection from the dead. As you are raised from the dead, by this symbolism you have completely left behind your old life and have become a new person. You are now free from the bondage of your old sins and from now on you are a servant of God. God grants you forgiveness of all your old sins and gives you his holy spirit, making you from now on his own son or daughter. You now have an everlasting covenant with God and he promises to raise you up as a glorious spirit being with everlasting life in the first resurrection at the return of Christ just as he first raised up Jesus from the dead.

So you see, the basic reason that baptism is not for children is that a person must have the mental capacity to understand this meaning and decide for himself to be baptized. It is a grownup personal decision that enters one into an everlasting covenant with God. It begins with God's calling that person, converting his mind and heart and the person's freewill choice to respond to God. An infant or child has no such mental capacity to make such a grownup decision.

The Catholic Church was not willing to wait until a person is grown up to be baptized. Why? Because they say, 'what if you wait until adulthood to baptize people and they die before reaching adulthood? Won't they be lost?' No, because God has provided in his plan the little-understood biblical doctrine of the second resurrection. You can read about the second resurrection in Rev 20:4-6 and also in Ezek 37:1-14. The first resurrection takes place at the beginning of the thousand years when Christ returns and the second resurrection is at the end of the thousand years. If a person dies in childhood or has lived and died in the jungles in Africa without ever having been baptized, he is not lost. God will give all who have not been converted and baptized in this life their opportunity in the second resurrection! By not understanding the concept of the second resurrection, the Catholic Church had no choice but to have infant baptism because this life is the only chance they think we've got to be saved.

A very good reason that baptism is a grownup decision is that a person is expected to 'count the cost' of becoming a Christian. Luk 14:25-33 explains what counting the cost means. You must be willing to give up anything and everything, even your life in order to be the disciple of Jesus. This principle will be tested more than ever in the end time when the Beast will rise up and persecute Christians and force everyone to choose whether to worship his miraculously talking image or be put to death (Rev 13:11-15). Do children or infants really understand what the cost may be of becoming a Christian? And considering this cost, should their parents make such a decision for them?

Act 2:38 says, "Repent, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins, and ye shall receive the gift of the holy spirit." When you are baptized, God gives you his holy spirit. The holy spirit affects forever the way you think. You no longer have the 'carnal' or natural mind you were born with that is the enemy of God because it is not subject to God's laws (Rom 8:7). 1 Cor 2:16 says that you now have the 'mind of Christ'. With the mind of Christ, you now wish to spend the rest of your life pleasing your Father God just as Christ himself did. Acts 5:32 says that God gives the holy spirit to them that obey him. Do baptized infants or children display the mind of Christ or the natural carnal mind that is not subject to God's laws or his will? Do infants or children understand that to receive God's holy spirit, you must be obedient to what he says?

The 'fruits' of having God's holy spirit show up in your character as you grow in Christian maturity after baptism. Gal 5:22 and Eph 5:9 give some of the fruits of the holy spirit. So when you are baptized you must show God the sincerity of your baptism by striving to produce these 'good fruits'. Mat 3:1-12 tells us that many Pharisees were coming to be baptized by John the Baptist. He knew that they were coming just to show off their religiosity so he called them a generation of vipers. He told them that they must bring forth 'fruits meet (or fitting) for repentance' and to not think that they were going to be saved just because they were descendants of Abraham. He told them that whoever is baptized and does not produce 'good fruits' is like an unproductive fruit tree that will be cut down and cast into the fire. Without true repentance from

the heart and producing of these good Christian fruits, baptism means nothing. Do infants or children understand that repentance and producing good Christian fruits MUST accompany baptism?

1Co 10:1-12 also tells how important it is to regard our baptism as a complete change of attitude and life by giving the example of the ancient Israelites. It says they were 'baptized unto Moses' when they went through the Red Sea. But later on after this baptism God overthrew many of them in the wilderness because they had not really repented when they left the bondage of Egypt. They continued sinning throughout their 40-year journey in the wilderness. They committed idolatry, lusted after evil things, were fornicators, murmured and complained and tempted Christ, etc. Then it says that this is a warning for us today that we could be 'overthrown' like they were if we do not take our baptism very seriously. Do infants or children understand that once we are baptized we must not continue living in sin?

Another point about baptism is how significant and awesome a thing it is to be desired and appreciated. Just imagine how you would feel if you were like Noah and his family, the only people on earth to be saved when the whole world comes crashing down around you destroyed by a great flood! The New Testament tells us that just as the ark saved Noah from the flood, our baptism saves us from the sin and wickedness that the whole world is drowning in. (1Pe 3:20-21) This is how important baptism is! It is the very lifeboat God is offering us. Are children and infants capable of understanding this tremendous significance and what an awesome thing it is to be able to escape from the evil and sin that engulfs the present world?

Finally we have the example of Jesus himself who was baptized by John the Baptist. Mat 3:13-17; 4:1-11. He was not baptized until he was about thirty years old. When he came up out of the water, God immediately gave him the holy spirit in the form of a dove coming down and lighting on him. Then immediately after his baptism the holy spirit drove Jesus into the wilderness where he was tempted by Satan the devil and fasted for 40 days and nights. This tells us that when we are baptized, Satan is now going to be our enemy and will do everything he can to destroy our faith. We are going to have to stay close to God by fasting and prayer and fight all the trials and temptations that Satan throws at us in order to keep our faith and confidence in God strong and hold it fast to the end.

To be baptized and receive God's holy spirit is the most important event that could take place in a person's life. It means that God, the creator of the universe has reached down and worked personally with an individual to convert his mind and heart. It means that the person has responded by accepting the invitation to be part of God's holy everlasting kingdom. Baptism, like marriage, must not be entered into lightly or ignorantly and God is not required to do his part in granting the holy spirit to anyone who has been baptized lightly or ignorantly. The person must have repented of his sins, have faith in God and be willing to obey God's will in all things as conditions for receiving eternal life through the sacrifice of Jesus Christ.

May God grant to all who read this and love God a true baptism and entrance into eternal life.