

BAPTISM SEMINAR

December 2017

I. WHAT IS A SACRAMENT?

WESTMINSTER CONFSSION OF FAITH (27.1) – “Sacraments are holy **signs** and **seals** of the covenant of grace, immediately instituted by God, to represent Christ and His benefits; and to confirm our interest in Him: as also, to put a visible difference between those that belong unto the Church and the rest of the world; and solemnly to engage them to the service of God in Christ, according to His Word.”

BRUCE MILNE (Know The Truth) - “An outward and visible sign of an inward and invisible grace.”

II. THREE PARTS OF A SACRAMENT

A. A Visible/Sensory Element

B. A Definite Activity Ordained By God

C. A Gracious Benefit Given To The Believer

LOUIS BERKOFF (Systematic Theology) - “The sacraments signify, not merely a general truth, but a promise given unto us and accepted by us, and serve to strengthen our faith with respect to the realization of that promise. They visibly represent and deepen our consciousness of, the spiritual blessings of the covenant, of the washing away of our sins, and of our participation of the life that is in Christ.

III. TWO COMMON ERRORS REGARDING SACRAMENTS

A. To Regard Sacraments As Necessary For Salvation

R.C. SPROUL - “Salvation is not through the sacraments. Salvation is by faith in Christ. Yet where faith is present the sacraments are not ignored or neglected. They are a vital part of the worship of God and the nurture of the Christian life.”

B. To Regard Sacraments As Unnecessary

BAPTISM

The Sacrament of Initiation

WESTMINSTER CONFSSION OF FAITH (28.1) - Baptism is a sacrament of the New Testament, ordained by Jesus Christ, not only for the solemn admission of the party baptized into the visible Church; but also to be unto him a sign and seal of the covenant of grace, of his ingrafting into Christ, of regeneration, of remission of sins, and of his giving up unto God, through Jesus Christ, to walk in the newness of life. Which sacrament is, by Christ's own appointment, to be continued in His Church until the end of the world.

I. DEFINING BAPTISM

MILLARD ERICKSON (Christian Theology) - "Baptism is...an act of faith and a testimony that one has been united with Christ in his death and resurrection, that one has experienced spiritual circumcision. It is a public indication of one's commitment to Christ."

R.C. SPROUL - "Baptism is the sacramental sign of the New Covenant. It is a sign by which God seals His pledge to the elect that they are included in the covenant of grace."

II. ADMINISTERING BAPTISM

A. Why Should a Person Be Baptized?

- **1 Corinthians 12:13**
- **Galatians 3:27**

1. In obedience to Christ's command

2. As a testimony

3. For a blessing

WAYNE GRUDEM (Systematic Theology) - "Since Jesus commanded his church to baptize, we would expect that there would be a measure of blessing connected with baptism, because all obedience to God by Christians brings God's favor with it. This obedience is specifically a public act of confessing Jesus as Savior, an act which in itself brings joy and blessing to a believer. Moreover, it is a sign of the believer's death and resurrection with Christ, and it seems fitting that the Holy Spirit would work through such a sign to increase our faith, to increase our experiential realization of death to the power and love of sin in our lives, and to increase our experience of the power of new resurrection life in Christ that we have as believers."

B. Who Should Be Baptized?

- Acts 2:38
- Acts 2:41
- Acts 8:12

C. When Should A Person Be Baptized?

- Acts 2:41
- Acts 8:12
- Acts 8:35-39
- Acts 10:44-48
- Acts 16:30-34

III. THE MEANING AND SIGNIFICANCE OF BAPTISM

MILLARD ERICKSON (Christian Theology) - "Baptism is a powerful form of proclamation. It is a setting forth of the truth of what Christ has done; it is a 'word in water' testifying to the believer's participation in the death and resurrection of Christ."

BRUCE WARE (Baptism: Three Views, 41) – "Baptism is the sign and seal of the new covenant, inaugurated by Christ's death and resurrection signifying the promise for the one baptized that sins are forgiven, that new life in Christ is

received, and that God gives the person a new heart and the indwelling Holy Spirit, by faith.”

A. Forgiveness/Cleansing

- Acts 22:16
- Titus 3:5
- Acts 2:38

B. Union with Christ in His Death and Resurrection

- Romans 6:3-5

1. The death He endured for us

2. The resurrection He secured for us

IV. WHAT ABOUT INFANT BAPTISM?

Infant (paedo) baptism (vs. believer’s or credobaptism) is the view that baptism ought to be administered to believers and their children as a sign of God’s covenant. For believers they would see the sign applied in the the same way, and for children, it is a promise that the covenant promises will apply when the conditions of faith are met. If the child is elect then there is no need to re-baptize because they have already been received into the community of faith.

JOHN MURRAY (Christian Baptism, preface) – “The argument for infant baptism rests upon the recognition that God’s redemptive action and revelation in this world are covenantal...Embedded in this covenantal action of God is the principle that the infant seed of believers are embraced with their parents in the covenant relation and provision.”

A. The Arguments For

1. Continuity of the covenants

- **1 Peter 2:9**
- **Galatians 3:14**

B.B. WARFIELD (in *Believer's Baptism*, 101) – “The argument in a nutshell is simply this: God established His church in the days of Abraham and put children into it. They must remain there until He puts them out. He has nowhere put them out. They are still then members of His Church and as such entitled to its ordinances.” (although most in this camp would argue only the ordinance of baptism and not the Lord's Supper)

STEPHEN WELLUM (*Believer's Baptism*, 97) – “At the heart of the advocacy and defense of the evangelical Reformed doctrine of infant baptism is the argument that it is an implication drawn from the comprehensive theological category of the “covenant of grace,” a category which, it is claimed, unites the Scriptures and without which the bible cannot be understood correctly. In many ways, all other arguments for infant baptism are secondary to this overall line of reasoning.”

2. Infants were circumcised under the Old Covenant as a covenant sign

BRYAN CHAPPELL (*Why Do We Baptize Infants?*, 11) – “Circumcision was God's way of marking his people with a visible pledge to honor his covenant for those who expressed faith in him. Just as a seal is the pledge of its author that he will uphold his promises when described conditions are met, so circumcision was God's pledge to provide all the blessings of his covenant when the condition of faith was met...A seal's validity does not depend on the time that the conditions of the covenant accompanying it are met...For this reason, God did not require that covenant parents wait until a child could express faith before commanding them to administer the covenant sign and seal of circumcision.”

3. Significance of the sign

4. Baptism is parallel to circumcision

BRYAN CHAPPELL (*Why Do We Baptize Infants?*, 13) – “While the covenant continues, its sign changes to reflect what God has done to maintain his

promises...Since the covenant remains but the sign changes, New Testament believers would naturally expect to apply the new sign of the covenant to themselves and their children as the old sign was applied.”

- **Acts 2:39**
- **Deuteronomy 12:28**
- **1 Corinthians 7:14**

5. Households (which surely included infants) were baptized in the NT

SINCLAIR FERGUSON (Baptism: Three Views, 102) – “Divine covenants in redemptive history were made with believers and with their seed – without exception.”

6. The NT does not explicitly forbid infant baptism

7. The church practiced infant baptism from early in its history.

B. The Arguments Against

1. An overemphasis on the continuity between the OT and the New.

2. Baptism in the NT is uniformly spoken of as for believers

- **Colossians 2:11-12**
- **1 Peter 3:21**

BRUCE WARE (Baptism: Three Views, 23) – “Every clear instance of baptism that we see in the New Testament, relates to the baptism of those who have repented of sin...and come to faith in Christ.

3. Significance of the Sign

- **Romans 2:29**

4. Parallels and Distinctions

- **John 1:12-13**
- **John 3:3**

5. There is no explicit testimony that household baptisms included infants.

BRYAN CHAPPELL (Why Do We Baptize Infants?, 15) – “We who believe in infant baptism must confess that the lack of any specific example of infant baptism in the New Testament is a strong counterweight to our position.”

6. There is no specific command in the NT to baptize infants.

7. History: church history is often full of contradictions.