

The Spectrum of Christian Faith

Why do we have to get baptized?

Thinking Mathematically

- Mathematics is the study of patterns.
- Mathematicians use deductive logic to create/discover logical systems. (algebra, geometry, calculus, etc.)
- Every logical system is incomplete (Gödel's Incompleteness Theorem) and is based on axioms assumed to be true.
- **Some things have to be taken on faith by trusting God.**

Thinking Statistically

- Statistics is the *science* of data. (Inductive logic)
- Statisticians use limited data samples to draw conclusions about population-level variables.
- Limited data does NOT mean you know nothing.
- **It takes *wisdom* to balance limited information between knowing nothing and knowing everything.**

Thinking Imaginatively

- Many evangelicals have lost their imagination and equate ultimate truth with provable fact and confuse knowledge with wisdom. This is modernism and not Christianity.
- Psychologist Richard Beck argues this is why Christian bookstore art is so bad.
- Literature Professor Karen Swallow Prior has argued that Christians should read literature so as to not lose their imaginations and their ability to think metaphorically, critically and wisely.

Why do we have to get baptized?

- How do we baptize?
- Who gets baptized?



Why?

Baptism is a Symbol (Ordinance)

- Baptism is a public declaration of a private faith.
- A public declaration that you are joining God's family.
- Signifies one's entrance into the kingdom of God.
- Baptism is not necessary for salvation.
- God has already accomplished the work of salvation.
- Symbolizes the death, burial and resurrection of Christ.

Why?

Baptism is a Sacrament.

- A sacrament (Latin) is a mysterious (Greek) encounter with God.
- A sacrament is a ceremony in which God's grace is conferred upon a person.
- Catholics and Protestants differ on the mechanism that delivers the means of grace in a sacrament but agree on the core idea.
- Baptism is the process in which God begins to join us to the church.
- Some Christians that consider baptism as a sacrament also believe that our sins are forgiven or removed during the process of baptism.

Why?

Baptism grants Salvation.

- Baptism is the means by which God initiates salvation.
- Analogy to marriage: You are not really married until the wedding so you are not really saved until baptism.
(Church of Christ)

Our Response to the Gospel of the King

Baptism, then, is not what produces salvation. It “saves” in that it reflects a heart decision: a *pledge of loyalty* to the risen Savior. In effect, baptism in New Testament theology is a *loyalty oath*, a public avowal of who is on the Lord’s side in the cosmic war between good and evil...Early baptismal formulas included a renunciation of Satan and his angels for this very reason. Baptism was—and still is—spiritual warfare.

Michael Heiser in *The Unseen Realm*

<https://www.moreunseenrealm.com/ch38/>

How?

Baptism by Immersion

- Baptize comes from the Greek word *baptize* which means to immerse or dip.
- Baptism, when described in the New Testament, is by immersion. (Matthew 3/Mark 1/Luke 3, Acts 8)
- Baptism by immersion is similar to the Jewish ritual purification (mikveh).

How?

Baptism by Sprinkling

Baptism by immersion is not always practical:

- Person physically unable to get in water.
- Lack of water/access to water.
- No one wants to immerse infants.

“The word ‘baptize’ means to immerse and it is clear that the rite was observed in the ancient church, but the details [of how baptism is performed] are of no importance.”

– John Calvin

Who: Believer's Baptism

Arguments for

- Baptism is only for people that can confess their sins and repent.
- Baptism in the New Testament initiates discipleship.
- Commanded in the great commission. (Matthew 28:19)
- Baptism in Acts is for those that believed or demonstrated their faith. (2:38-41, 8:12-13, 8:36-38, 9:18 16:15, 16:33, 18:18, 22:16)

Arguments against

- Ignores the continuity between circumcision and baptism.
- Runs counter to long church. Tradition of infant baptism.
- Ignores New Testament passages on household baptism.
- Influenced by modern individualism.

Who: Infant Baptism

Arguments for

- Children are included in God's covenants: (Genesis 17:7, Joshua 8:35, Acts 2:38-39)
- Households are baptized in Acts (Cornelius – 11:13-14, Lydia – Acts 16:14, Crispus – Acts 18:8, Stephanus – 1 Corinthians 1:16)
- Continuity with circumcision (Colossians 2:11-12)
- Church tradition since the second century

- Shows God's initiative in salvation.
- Still allows for adult baptism

Arguments against

- Not explicitly referenced in the New Testament
- Ignores New Testament passages that say faith is a prerequisite to baptism. (Great Commission)

Believer's Baptism

- Baptists (symbol)
- Anabaptist
- Church of Christ (salvation)
- some Methodists

Infant Baptism

- Eastern Orthodox
- Catholic
- Reformed
- Lutherans
- Anglicans
- Nazarenes
- some Methodists

EPC Position

From the 2022-2023 *EPC Book of Worship*, Section 3-2

A. Candidates for Baptism

Those eligible to receive this sacrament are those who have professed their faith in Jesus Christ as Savior and have promised to be obedient to Him, along with the infants of one or both believing parents. Also, those who have legal responsibility for an infant have the right to present the child for Baptism.

B. Method of Baptism

In the sacrament of Baptism, water is to be used. Immersion or dipping the person into the water is not essential and Baptism is ordinarily administered by pouring or sprinkling.

EPC Position

C. Effectiveness of Baptism

God's grace and salvation are not inseparably connected to this sacrament. Some who are baptized will be lost and some not baptized will be saved. Nevertheless, it is a great sin to make light of or to neglect this sacrament. A great benefit is lost when Baptism is neglected, for God promises to bless His people through this sacrament. The effectiveness of Baptism is not tied to the moment it is administered, yet God who keeps His promises confers His grace according to His own will and in His appointed time.

D. Administration of Baptism

The grace received through Baptism does not come from the tradition or form of administration, and since it is not dependent upon the devoutness or the intention of the person administering it, Baptism should be administered only once.

Meat Greg Boyd

What is an Anabaptist?

Anabaptist means re-baptizer referring to the early Anabaptist tradition that converts from churches that practice infant baptism be baptized again as adults. The original Anabaptists were radical reformers that thought Luther and Calvin did not go far enough in their rejection of ritual in favor of allegiance to Jesus alone. Modern Anabaptists are known for their commitment to community, simplicity, service and non-violence and include the Mennonite, Amish and Brethren denominations.

Further Reading

- Greg Boyd's full sermon "From Baptist to Anabaptist":
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=dTqKdbnvDqA>
- Richard Beck's blog: <http://experimentaltheology.blogspot.com/>
- Good Books Make Better People by Karen Swallow Prior:
<https://www.christianitytoday.com/ct/2019/january-february/karen-swallow-prior-good-books-make-better-people-reading.html>
- Karen Swallow Prior on the Holy Post podcast:
<https://www.holypost.com/post/episode-448-beth-moore-s-exit-the-problem-of-impooverished-imaginings-with-karen-swallow-prior>
- Association of Christians in the Mathematical Sciences:
<https://acmsonline.org/>

Further Reading

- Four Views on Baptism – Thomas J. Nettles, Richard L. Pratt Jr., Robert Kolb and John Castelein, Zondervan Counterpoints, 2007
- Baptism: A Guide to Life from Death by Peter J. Leithart, Lexham Press Christian Essentials Series, 2021
- It Takes a Church to Baptize by Scot McKnight, Brazos Press, 2018