

INFANT BAPTISM

The Christian ordinance of baptism has from the early days of the church (ie. circa second century) has had controversy attached to it such as whether the ordinance should be administered only to adults or whether it should also be applied to infants. The true Church of God does not believe in the baptism of infants or children for reasons explained herein. During the age of the apostles, there are no records of infant baptisms, in fact, only adult Jews and Gentiles were baptized upon the profession of their faith.

The practice of infant baptism was not done during the time of Jesus and the Apostles. In fact, the Scriptures, when speaking of the multitudes of people converting to Christianity, only mentions adults. ***“But when they believed Philip preaching the things concerning the kingdom of God, and the name of Jesus Christ, they were baptized, both men and women.”*** Acts 8:12; ***“And believers were the more added to the Lord, multitudes both of men and women.”*** Acts 5:14. In a desperate attempt to justify infant baptism, some suggest that circumcision was a form of baptism and seeing that infants that were only eight days old were being circumcised, this somehow suggests that infants could be initiated into the church. The first obvious point to make is that the rite of circumcision does not share the same meaning of baptism; the covenant of circumcision was made with Abraham and his descendants who were required to keep it, thus, the covenant does not apply to Christians. The covenant of circumcision is described in the first ten verses of Genesis 17 and is only obligatory for the children of Abraham. Baptism is very different from circumcision in that a candidate of baptism is supposed to take on baptism willingly in a conscious decision to start following the ways of Jesus whereas the rite of circumcision is done without the baby’s knowledge or consent and symbolizes the covenant between God and Abraham relating to the many nations that Abraham’s seed would give rise to.

To be baptized and buried with Christ, the scriptures state that one must be repentant of their sins and have the belief that Jesus of Nazareth is the Son of man and the Son of God, the Messiah. Baptism symbolizes the burying of the old person of sin and the beginning of a new life in the Christ. How can a baby understand who the Christ is or be repentant of sins it knows nothing about?

Another argument put forth for supporting infant baptisms is where it was said to Cornelius the centurion in Acts 11:14 that ***“all thy house shall be saved”***, which supposedly gives evidence that infants were baptized along with the adults. As a pre-text to discussion of Cornelius, feel free to read all of Acts 10 and at least up to verse 18 of Acts 11, however, for our purposes, we will only quote certain sections as follows: ***“And the morrow after they entered into Caesarea. And Cornelius waited for them, and had called together his kinsmen and near friends ... And as he talked with him, he went in, and found many that were come together ... To him give all the prophets witness, that through his name whosoever believeth in him shall receive remission of sins. While Peter yet spake these words, the Holy Ghost fell on all them which heard the word ... Can any man forbid water, that these should not be baptized, which have received the Holy Ghost as well as we? And he commanded them to be baptized in the name of the Lord. Then prayed they him to tarry certain days.”*** Acts 10:24, 27, 43, 44, 47, 48; ***“And when Peter was come up to Jerusalem, they that were of the circumcision contended with him, saying, Thou wentest in to men uncircumcised, and didst eat with them ... Send men to Joppa, and call for Simon, whose surname is Peter, who shall tell thee words, whereby thou and all thy house shall be saved. And as I began to speak, the Holy Ghost fell on them, as on us at the beginning.”*** Acts 11:2b, 3, 14, 15. When you read the whole story of Cornelius, nowhere is there any mention of infants being baptized, in fact, it makes clear that in order to take the step of baptism, one must believe in the Word of God and believe that Jesus of Nazareth was the Christ of God. To believe in something requires understanding and comprehension of the thing that a person places their belief in – an infant does not have the ability to reason ideologies and apply logic to statements being made by others. Thus, infants could not be baptized. Pay attention to the fact that Cornelius gathered his kinsmen and near friends to hear the preaching of Peter – one can safely assume that

his kinsmen and friends were not infants, thus, there would not have been infants in attendance for Peter's preaching and the subsequent baptisms.

A verse that those believing in infant baptism sometimes use to justify "baptizing" babies is where Jesus says ***"Suffer little children, and forbid them not, to come unto me: for of such is the kingdom of heaven."*** Matthew 19:14. To some, this may sound like a reasonable basis to support infant baptism, however, let us read the whole passage surrounding this comment so that we know the context in which Jesus was speaking. ***"And they brought young children to him that he should touch them and his disciples rebuked those that brought them: but when Jesus saw it, he was much displeased, and said unto them, Suffer the little children to come unto me, and forbid them not for of such is the kingdom of God. Verily I say unto you, Whosoever shall not receive the kingdom of God as a little child, he shall not enter therein."*** Mark 10:13 to 15; ***"And they brought unto him also infants, that he would touch them: but when his disciples saw it, they rebuked them: but Jesus called them unto him, and said, Suffer little children to come unto me, and forbid them not: for of such is the kingdom of God. Verily I say unto you, Whosoever shall not received the kingdom of God as a little child shall in no wise enter therein."*** Luke 18:15 to 17. It should be obvious that no infants or children were being baptized; Jesus was using the children as an example of how all of us should receive the teachings of God and His Son in a state of humility and innocence. Jesus uses children as an example of how adults should receive the Word of God in Matthew 18:3, 4: ***"And said, Verily I say unto you, Except ye be converted, and become as little children, ye shall not enter into the kingdom of heaven. Whosoever therefore shall humble himself as this little child, the same is greatest in the kingdom of heaven."*** Clearly, Jesus regarded children as examples of how we should trust in God; children look up to their parents for instruction, protection and love and put their unquestioning trust in them and it should not be any different for our relationship with our heavenly Father. These previous verses do not support infant baptisms but simply demonstrate what our relationship with our Father should be like.

Moving on with our study, let's examine the facets that are important to a potential baptism candidate: ***"But when they believed Philip preaching the things concerning, the kingdom of God, and the name of Jesus Christ, they were baptized, both men and women. Then Simon himself believed also: and when he was baptized, he continued with Philip ..."*** Acts 8:12, 13b; ***"And brought them out, and said, Sirs, what must I do to be saved? And they said, Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved, and thy house. And they spake unto him the word of the Lord..."*** Acts 16:30 to 32a; ***"Then Peter said unto them, 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 Ghost ... and with many other words did he testify and exhort saying, Save yourselves from this untoward generation. Then they that gladly received his word were baptized..."*** Acts 2:38, 40, 41a. Note that from these verses that the candidate for baptism must repent for their past wrongs, must possess knowledge of the kingdom of God (note that we are not saying full and complete understanding is required) and the belief that Jesus of Nazareth is the Christ of God. An infant cannot repent because it does not possess knowledge of what sin is – one must know what sin is before they can be sorry for it. Nor can babies comprehend the concept of the kingdom of God nor of who Jesus was and what he died for.

An erroneous ideology taught by some denominations is that an infant inherits their parents' sins. This is totally without biblical support and is merely a traditional belief among these denominations. Those who were "baptized" as a baby and continue to uphold their parents' beliefs will have not been given the opportunity of repentance before God and the person grows up thinking that he or she has given him or herself to God, when in fact, their "baptism" was decided by another person(s). Another unfortunate aspect of such "baptisms" is that the baptism has little meaning to the recipient who received the rite as a baby, not having any idea what was going on and had no serious contemplation of the kind of life they should be leading.

This tract has demonstrated that infant baptisms are totally non-scriptural. The baptism taught by Jesus and the Apostles calls for repentance, and understanding of the kingdom of God and the

acceptance of Jesus of Nazareth as our Messiah. If you are one of those who received an infant baptism, but seek to lead an earnest life modeled after Jesus the Christ, you should consider receiving a baptism by immersion but be sure that you have the required criteria before taking that step. Feel free to download our other books relating to the topic of baptism. As a closing thought, we should be aware that the step of baptism should always be a personal choice and can only be done once we know of God and His Son, Jesus since our own salvation is dependent on the choices we make as individuals during our lives; we cannot be saved by our parents or any other person. ***“Though Noah, Daniel, and Job were in it as I live, saith the Lord GOD, they shall deliver neither son nor daughter; they shall deliver their own souls by their righteousness.”*** Ezekiel 14:20.